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Agnes Evans  
1906

A LADDER OF TEARS



*Agnes S. Jones*  
*1906*  

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A LADDER OF TEARS



*'Life itself has speech and is never silent.  
And its utterance is not, as you that are  
deaf may suppose, a cry: it is a song.'*

*'The kingdom of heaven is within you.'*

*'So would her soul, already in heaven, seem then  
To climb by tears.'*

# A LADDER OF TEARS

BY G. COLMORE

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'THE STRANGE STORY OF HESTER WYNNE'  
ETC. ETC.



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## CHAPTER I

'Shadows dwell in its teeming girth,  
Of the known and unknown things of earth.'

I HAD a very happy girlhood ; happier than my childhood. I think it is often so. In the very beginning, when life is strange, new, and very narrow, when consciousness is but dimly awake, when 'the clouds of glory' still veil 'the secrets of the prison-house,' the child soul in certain natures is apt to suffer ; a suffering which generally remains unknown, because at the time it is entirely unexpressed, and afterwards, when its record might find expression, it is constantly forgotten. It happens that I remember some of the experiences and sensations of that early time, and I know that mingled with the joyous nursery days were many moments—nay, hours—of pain. When I was unhappy, how unhappy I was ! A harsh word set my soul a-quiver, and a disappointment caused grief intense in its acuteness and profundity. But the sorrows of the day paled before the terrors of the night. Do most children suffer from fear, and say nothing about it ? or are there many to whom night brings only reposeful sleep ? I, anyhow, was not amongst these last. With the departure of the day, the whole atmosphere of the house was changed. The staircase, in the daytime a harmless highway lending itself to various methods of ascent and descent, became, in the half obscurity of dim, far-separated gas jets, a perilous, horror-haunted path, fearful to gaze upon from above, more fearful to traverse from below at the bedtime hour. Well do I remember the intermediate landing between the

drawing-room and nursery floors, where the closed door of that place of mystery, the spare bedroom, the blank darkness of my mother's chamber, the tiny flame of gas in my father's dressing-room, suggested terrors positive in strength though vague in conception. How bright the nursery fire was on those dark winter evenings, and how delightful, after the bath, to be allowed, seated on a safe, familiar knee, to press one's feet against the wires of the tall fender, to feel the pleasant warmth from the glowing grate, and watch the flames leap and play amongst the coals! In that cheerful comfort, past and future were forgotten; but it did not last. Very soon one was gathered up by the strong arms above that friendly knee and carried from safe warmth into desolation.

I do not remember whether the night nursery was cold; I know there was never any fire there; when the clothes had been tucked in and the door was shut, there was no light but the flicker of gas, too feeble to disperse the darkness, strong enough to reveal the haunting forms—bears or policemen or undefined entities—which, on so many nights, that darkness contained. Wherefore, when consigned to slumber, my face was turned invariably to the wall, and my head was covered by the bedclothes. My sister in her crib was miles away; a vast Sahara stretched between me and her; and it was always far on in the incalculable hours of night when the deep breathing of that remarkable person, Nurse, who, like all grown-ups, feared nothing in this world or beyond it, mitigated somewhat the terrors of the dark silence. In this world or beyond it, I have said; and truly there was a region, outside this world as it seemed, into which my childish consciousness passed with the coming of sleep. I suppose I dreamed many harmless, peaceable, childlike dreams, but I have not remembered them; I remember only the horrible ones—dreams which had to do with nothing in my daily life, with nothing I knew about or had been told; concerned with places, people, sensations, atmospheres with which I became familiar as they repeated them-

selves in dreamland, but which were altogether unconnected with the waking world. There was one woman with a pale, misty, but entirely terrible face . . .

But no, I will not enter upon a record of these early experiences, though the horror of them lives still in my remembrance; I will leave them and the early days to which they belong, and pass on to the period of girlhood. Delicate as a child, I grew stronger as I entered my teens, and as the world of living men pressed more closely around me, the world of shadows which had permeated to a large extent the consciousness of my earlier days grew gradually more distant and more dim. Sometimes, even yet, if I awoke in the early morning when the world was very still, or if, in the hush of twilight, I was alone, the old feeling came over me, the feeling that there was no 'here' and no 'now,' but that heaven and earth, past and future, time and eternity, were all one; a pin's head space, and yet infinite, a moment, but everlasting. At one time, when the feeling was frequent, I thought that it was common to everybody, but as I grew older I learned somehow, though I never spoke of it, that it was peculiar to myself, or at least that nobody I knew shared it with me. That did not strike me as wonderful at the time I realised it, for I was then entering upon the stage of fancying that a great many things I thought and felt had never been felt or thought by anybody before. I was very fixed in my opinions at that time, very sure of my own judgment, very censorious in respect of wrongdoing, very intolerant in the matter of morals. I read Carlyle, Ruskin, Tennyson, Whyte Melville, and Owen Meredith; I thought it would be delightful to die of a broken heart, and had a remarkably good appetite. The phase of priggdom was somewhat curtailed and considerably qualified by my coming-out. I enjoyed myself *immensely*. I do not like italics, but I use them in the effort to give expression to the keenness of appetite with which I tasted—nay, devoured—pleasure in those days. My two eldest sisters had married when I was a child; my sister of the

crib on the other side of Sahara was wedded at the beginning of my first season. I was the only child left at home—my two brothers having posts abroad—and my father's favourite. He took me everywhere, entered into all my amusements, was never tired of admiring me and seeing me admired. I adored him. My mother, a confirmed invalid, died when I was about ten; and though I had for her a real affection, combined with a sentiment which was half pity and half respect, the spontaneous, ardent, intense love of my heart was for my father. We were so far alike in person, temperament, and character that I could feel myself verily his child, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh; we were so far different as to avoid the conflict which sometimes arises between two natures made in the same mould; we were companions, playfellows, friends. I can see him now, with his straight figure and well-cut face, with the mobile mouth, merry with laughter, the eyes soft with tenderness. It was through him that the desire for self-sacrifice, pictured in my sentimental imaginings as death from a broken heart, found an actual means of realisation; but that part of the story does not come just yet; I must dwell for a little while first on the happiness of my girlhood. I learned a good many things when I came out. I learned to flirt, in the harmless girlish way which is the outcome of high spirits and a naïve love of admiration; I learned to talk serious sentiment and flippant nonsense (no doubt it was all nonsense, but some of my conversations with my partners seemed to me very deep in those days); I learned that most of the people we knew were richer than we were; and I learned that young men liked me much better than their mothers did. This did not disturb me much. I danced with the young men and not with their mothers, and any woman over thirty was 'an old frump' to me in those days and had very little to do with life except as a spectator; nevertheless there were cold glances and frigid ways which half hurt and half incensed me. Why should people not like me, when I had done them no harm? I

inquired of myself, and told my father that I thought I liked men better than women. I remember that he laughed and said it was perhaps because men liked me better than women did. I remember his saying that so well, because it agreed with what the fortune-teller told me. In those far-off days palmistry was not the fashion, and the word 'palmiste' had not come into use; we spoke of fortune-tellers, and they were few and far between. It happened though, when I was up at Oxford for a Commemoration, that there was a great talk amongst the undergraduates of a woman who had lately come to the town and who was reputed to have a marvellous faculty for deciphering the past and foretelling the future. Of course everybody derided her pretended gifts, and at the same time thought there might be 'something in it'; and of course everybody wanted to see her because she was so difficult to see. She charged no fee; those who were fortunate enough to obtain an interview made her—if they chose, she said—a gift at parting; but she frequently refused a sitting to would-be consultants. 'Madame Borini is very sorry, but she is unable to see you to-day,' was the message which often disappointed the curiosity of those who wished to test her powers. As I heard her talked about, I became filled with an ardent desire to see her. The things in heaven and earth not dreamt of in most people's philosophies had always had an attraction for me, and Madame Borini might be one of those 'bubbles of the earth' which I secretly included in Nature's possibilities. I wrote her a note asking her to give me an appointment, and I persuaded my father, by a droop of the mouth and a certain intonation of voice which I knew were more potent than any amount of reasoning, to take it and wait for an answer. I began the note, 'Dear Madam,' and I signed it with my initials. I flattered myself that my writing was like a man's, and thought Madame Borini would expect to see an undergraduate. The answer which came back disappointed me in respect of the writing, but raised my conception of the sender's powers of divination. 'Madame



Borini will be glad to see the young lady at half-past ten to-morrow morning,' it ran.

At half-past ten the next morning I went, escorted by father, to the little back street in which the fortune-teller lived. Father said he would go for a walk and come back in half an hour, and I followed the slatternly maid up the narrow staircase to a room on the first floor. It was empty, and with my heart thumping with curiosity and excitement, I sat down and looked about me. There was not much to see; it was a shabby little room, with lodging-house and second-rate writ large on the furniture. I remember there were paper flowers under a glass case on the mantelpiece, and a very forlorn-looking straggling geranium in an iron stand in one of the windows. The only object of beauty in the room was a vase of tall white lilies which stood on a somewhat tottery little chiffonier, together with a photograph and a Greek cross cut in ivory. I had not long to wait: the door opened, and Madame Borini came in. A short, squat figure, a round, commonplace face, and somewhat frowzy hair: she was neither Madame nor Borini, of that I felt sure, but an ordinary Englishwoman of the name of Brown. The only remarkable thing about her were her eyes: they were rather protruding, dim and misty, yet piercing; of a pale, peculiar blue which I have seen since in certain Scotchwomen credited with the possession of 'the second sight.' She said 'Good morning' in an uneducated voice, and asked me to sit near the window. There was a little table there with a velvet cushion on it. She spread my hands on the cushion, palms upward, and gazed at the lines without speaking. At last she raised her eyes. 'I suppose you don't want the past? There are no events in it.'

'No.'

'Or your character?'

'No, thank you.'

She cast her eyes on my hand again, and was silent for another little space. Then, 'How old are you?' she asked.

'Twenty-one.'

'You have another year of the life you are leading now. Then comes trouble, marriage, and a death. There will be three where there should be one; there will be age where there should be youth. There will be a blossom of your body, and later a bloom of your heart. The years are calm, but you will suffer; there are few events, but many experiences. Between thirty and forty there are two dark clouds, then a blank, and then a break and change. The most important part of your life comes after forty. The other sex will always like you better than your own. In the end you will be one of us.' The fortune-teller spoke very slowly; when she ceased, she passed her hand across her eyes, looked at me, and said, 'That is all I can tell you.'

'But I don't understand,' I exclaimed; 'and I want to know——'

She interrupted me. 'That is all I can tell you,' she said again.

'Tell me at least,' I implored meekly, 'what you mean by "one of us."'

'You will be—not a materialist.'

'But I'm not now,' I protested.

She half smiled, it might be at the fervour of my tone. 'Perhaps not, relatively; I spoke positively.' She rose, and I felt that the interview was over.

That evening, walking in the Balliol Quadrangle between two dances, I said: 'What is a materialist?'

My partner was the great Oxford poet, who had won the Newdigate, who wrote sonnets, and who was destined by his contemporaries for the Laureateship. 'One,' he replied, 'who makes a fetish of the flesh and feeds the soul with facts.'

'Oh,' I said, awed by his alliteration; 'I was told I was one. Do you think I make a fetish of——'

'You,' he broke in, 'you, Miss Etheridge, are too ethereal in organisation and in aim——'

Just then I caught the faint strain of the opening bars of the next waltz—one of my favourites—and I broke off the

discussion in my desire to begin to dance before the floor became too crowded. Dancing was more to me than any theories or definitions at that time.

I shall never forget those Oxford days ; the gray old buildings, the young life that bubbled in and about them, the Quads gay with sunshine or melancholy with moonlight ; the boating parties and the breakfasts and lunches and teas ; the walking home from the balls in the light of the dawn, when already it was to-morrow, and to-morrow meant new delights. I think my happiest time was spent in that learned and laughing town, and when, looking back, I picture my girlhood as an opening rose, the Oxford days are as the dewdrops on its petals.

## CHAPTER II

'I said to Love, "Lo, one thing troubles me!  
How shall I show the way in which I love?"'

I DO not know quite when the trouble began; dimly, I suppose, I saw the shadow grow, but I did not realise what it meant till the substance was there full grown. My dear father! how he suffered when the blow came! what an agony of apprehension and remorse he must have gone through before it fell! I say remorse, because he reproached himself so bitterly; but I never blamed him. I do not know whether the others did, but whatever they all thought and felt, they said very little to me, knowing that in the eyes of my passionate devotion he could do no wrong. Since then I have learned that a blind love is not the highest or the most unselfish, but in those days I saw everything and everybody—except when I was completely indifferent—black or white, and to allow a single speck on the garment of my divinities would have seemed to me disloyal.

We had never been rich, and now we were miserably poor. Father, hoping to increase our means, had lost instead of gained, had struggled to retrieve the first mistake only to fall into fresh ones, and found himself in the end face to face with ruin. I shall never forget the dreadful day when he told me how matters stood; I shall never forget the letter-writing to the family, and the lawyers coming to see him in the library, and my sisters arriving the next day flurried and fearful; a little inclined to truisms in respect of speculation, and to platitudes savouring of reproach; but not venturing, as I said, to utter a word of positive blame before me, who, at the first

hint of such an attitude, flared up and said that of course when a person had done anything that did not turn out well, it was very easy to point out that the thing was unwise.

What was to be done, however? That was what they wanted to know. Cordelia, my eldest sister, who was supposed to have the most sense and the best judgment of the family, took me apart, and treated the subject from a practical point of view.

'It is you, Annabel, who must help poor papa,' she said. 'You are the only one who can do it, the rest of us being already married.'

'What can I do?' I asked eagerly. 'Do you mean to go out as a gov——'

'We are comfortably off,' continued Cordelia, 'but none of our husbands are what you would call wealthy men.'

'You are better off than we are,' I answered, 'than we *were* even, I mean. James can afford to give you a car——'

'You must marry money,' said Cordelia, treating my remark as a pointless parenthesis.

'Marry money!' I gasped, opening my eyes very wide. My dream had been love in a cottage with somebody very tall and handsome and clever—an artist or a poet. And besides, whom could I marry? All the nicest young men I knew were more or less impecunious, and as for the eldest sons, the frigid glances from maternal eyes would be more frigid than ever now, I knew. 'I never can!' I exclaimed. 'You see, the mothers——'

'What *do* you mean?' asked my sister.

'They have never liked me,' I said sadly, 'the mothers of the rich ones, and now, of course, it will be worse than ever.'

'Absurd child!' said Cordelia. 'All men have not mothers'; and then she left me.

It was about a week after this that I met Mr. West coming out of father's smoking-room. I shook hands with him warmly, and said I was delighted to see him. We had not known him very long, but he was a most friendly neighbour, and I thought it so kind of him to come and see father

in his misfortune. He had been once or twice already, for father had written to him at once saying that he wanted to get 'The Firs' off his hands, and frankly stating the reason. 'The Firs' was a dear little nutshell of a place that we had taken for the summer months. It belonged to Mr. West, who was the owner of most of the property in that neighbourhood, and he was always lending us carriages and sending fruit and flowers from his garden, and doing all he could to make our stay pleasant. I liked him very much, though I considered him too old to be in the least interesting, and I thought him a nice companion for father, now that father was so miserable and refused to see any of the other people in the neighbourhood. He seemed very pleased when I said I was glad to see him, and said he hoped to come back in the morning, and that I perhaps—he stammered a little here—I would give him half an hour's conversation.

'Oh certainly,' I said; 'but——' I suppose I looked very much surprised, for what could Mr. West want to talk to *me* about?

'I have a plan I want to talk over with you,' he said.

'Anything to do with father?' I asked eagerly.

'With both you and him,' he answered.

'Oh, I'll be ready—any time you like,' I said. 'We have always finished breakfast by half-past nine.'

'I will come,' he answered, 'about eleven.'

As he was going out of the door, I called after him: 'Does father know about the plan?'

'Yes, he knows'; and then Mr. West was gone.

I lingered a little at the open door, looking out over the garden. I was excited about the plan, and considerably flattered at the idea of being consulted. I can see the lawn now with the long shadows stretching over it, and the low sun glowing behind the branches of the fir-trees. I lingered for five minutes perhaps, and then went into the smoking-room. Father was sitting by the window, his elbows on the writing-table, his face sunk in his hands; he did not look up as I came in. I flung my arms round his neck.



have gone wrong with my ears or with father's speech. Then I got up.

'Me! Mr. West's wife? Do you mean he wants to—to marry me?'

'That's what he wants, Annie.'

I was so bewildered that I could find no clear thought, nor words in which to express myself.

'But he said,' I stammered at last, 'he said he had a plan—about *you*—I thought it was to help you; he was to come and talk it over—and this——'

'This is the plan,' said father.

'But I don't understand. How——'

'Sit down again, Annabel,' my father said, 'and listen to me. Mr. West asked me this afternoon for my permission to make you an offer of marriage. At first I refused that permission, feeling sure that you had never thought of him in the light of a husband, and that you would not be likely ever to look upon him in that light. I was right, was I not?'

'Of course you were right. How could he ever think of anything so absurd?' That was the answer on the tip of my tongue, but I did not utter it, for suddenly Cordelia's words flashed into my mind: 'You must marry money,' and 'All men have not mothers.' Mr. West was rich, I knew, and no doubt his mother had been dead for ages; perhaps—— I did not wait to finish the thought. 'I don't know,' I said, and tried to smile, but whether I succeeded or not I cannot say, for there was an odd feeling in my lips as if they wanted to go the other way.

'Annabel, surely——'

'I might like it very much,' I went on, and the smile was all right this time, for the thought, dim before, was clear in my mind now. I spoke it out. 'And perhaps, if I married him, he might be able to help you, dear.'

Father got up and came round to my side of the table and took my face between his two hands. 'Child, child, that's just it, and just *why* I didn't want you to know anything about it. But he said it was not fair to him not to give him



the chance of speaking to you, and I could not forbid it.' There was such a world of anguish in his face, such a depth of tenderness in his eyes, such a tremulous sorrow in his voice, that I felt there was only one thing to be done, and that was to sweep any idea of self-sacrifice altogether out of the question. I assumed an expression which was meant to be like that of Cordelia when she was most sensible.

'Of course it would not have been fair to Mr. West,' I said, 'or to me either. I was taken by surprise, but when I come to consider it, I may wish to accept him. I will take a turn in the garden and think it over.' Then, with a somewhat pompous air, which I could see took my poor father considerably aback, I rose and left the room.

There was a walk in the garden, hidden from all the windows of the house, and thither I betook myself. The sun was lower now, and there was a broad band of pink and gold behind the fir-trees; everything was still, for it was the space between day and night when the whole of Nature is hushed. I walked up and down and thought, and as I walked, my thought became clearer, and my resolution stronger, till at last my mind was quite set and firm. It may seem that I did not give up much when I resolved to marry Mr. West; yet I laid down everything my youth clung to. I had never been really in love; there was no particular affection I had to kill, no one man I had to give up: but I gave up my girlhood's dream, the ideal man, the fairy prince of my imaginings; I gave up romance, the unformulated, uncomprehended longings of the woman; I gave up the marvellous possibilities that life holds out at twenty-two. And it was all so different from any conception of self-sacrifice I had ever entertained; there was no broken heart, no pining away, no death for the sake of love; there was nothing poetical or heroic in marrying a rich old man. I do not know how long I stayed in the garden, not more than half an hour, I think. When I went in, father was still in the smoking-room. I told him that I should like to be married, that so many of my friends had been married or engaged

lately that I was beginning to feel rather left behind ; I told him that I thought Mr. West delightful, and was sure I should be happy with him ; and I said that I thought it would be great fun to be very rich and the mistress of such a lovely place as Camp Holt. Father looked at me wistfully, but I laughed, and was very merry ; and by and by I saw the cloud roll away from his face, and the look that had not been there for many a day steal back into his eyes ; and all that evening I noticed that his mouth was set in the old sweet way, and not in the recent curves that had hurt me so.

The next morning I waited by the garden gate for Mr. West. He surely must have thought me an odd young woman, though he never said so, then or since, for before he had time to make me an offer of marriage, I accepted him. 'Mr. West,' I said, 'I shall be very glad to marry you. I am not in love with you, but I do like you, and I have no doubt I shall like you more when I know you better ; and if you will pay father's debts, I will do my best to be all you wish.' I said it all in one breath, and, as he was about to speak, I added : 'I think I ought to tell you that if it had not been for father's debts, I should have refused you.' Then, quite suddenly, and altogether unexpectedly to myself, I began to cry.

He was very good to me. I remember that he said I was a dear, straightforward child, that I was to be his wife and daughter all in one, and that his great and only desire would be to make me happy. Later on he spoke to me of his children. I knew that he had two sons by his first marriage, but I had never seen them. He told me now that the elder one, Bertram, was twenty-three, a year older than I was ; Ellis, the younger, was nineteen. 'They will not interfere with your life,' Mr. West said. 'Bertram is travelling abroad just now, and Ellis is studying with a private tutor. Later on they will be living in London ; I do not approve of young men being idle, and I intend them both to take up some business or profession.'

I did not feel sure that I should not have preferred the young men living at home ; it might be more lively than being

quite alone with Mr. West; but I reflected that they might possibly be not too pleasantly disposed towards a stepmother, and that on the whole I might get on better without them.

My engagement created much excitement and rejoicing in the family. Cordelia was especially pleased and approving. 'I am so glad, dear little sister,' she wrote, 'that you have displayed, in such a high degree, both sense and feeling. You are securing for yourself a good establishment and a desirable position, and at the same time are enabled to relieve poor papa from his unfortunate embarrassments.'

When she came down to spend the day and be introduced to Mr. West, I told her that my decision was greatly owing to what she had said to me, and she was more pleased than ever.

The engagement was not long; there was nothing to wait for, Mr. West said, nor indeed was there. There were lawyers, and settlements, and all sorts of papers to sign. I said that I would rather have nothing settled upon me, that I would like to feel that father's debts were paid instead of there being a settlement in my favour; but Mr. West would not hear of such an arrangement, and made what Cordelia called ample provision for me. There was my trousseau to be bought too, and I was continually going to dressmakers, or dressmakers were coming to me; and I remember being glad that there was always something to do. Then, at last, it was the evening before my wedding day, when I clung to father and said I could never leave him; and then it was the day itself, and I drove to the church with a white veil over my head that made everything seem dim and blurred and dreamlike; and then there was the breakfast. People were married in the morning and there were always wedding breakfasts in those days.

Then I drove away alone with Mr. West, and knew that it was all real and that I should never wake up to find it was a dream. He was fifty-eight, and I was twenty-two.

So I laid down my girlhood.

### CHAPTER III

‘Light up! I will on my way; see, courage!’

It is strange to me, in looking back, to think how little my marriage developed me. I hold that marriage, in the life of a woman, is the great awakener; it gives a standpoint, a view of life, an emotional—I had almost added, an intellectual—understanding of many of life’s realities, hardly compassable without it. This is true, I think, of the whole of our sex; though the extent to which it is so, varies according to the predominance of that subtle inner temperamental quality, which marks the essential nature of the woman. There are some women, in fact, in whom this particular feminine quality seems to be lacking, or almost lacking, or present only in a minor degree, and in the cases of such, I can understand that the character and point of view would not be much affected by the altered conditions of marriage. But I belonged to none of these classes; I was always very much of a woman, and so it seems somewhat curious that for some years after my marriage I continued to be the same undeveloped child that I had been during my girlhood. It was so, I suppose, because my emotional nature was quite unstirred, because the possibilities in herself and in life which love arouses and reveals to a woman’s consciousness, remained in me still vague, indefinite, and obscure, attaining to no more than the dim and shadowy existence of those romantic girlish dreams which I deemed it my duty, now that I was Mr. West’s wife, to put entirely away from me. I found it very difficult to leave off calling him Mr. West and to think and speak of and to him as Godfrey. He was very good to me, always from the beginning to the end,

and I soon became fond of him. Certainly I did not love my husband, but neither—after the first instinctive shrinking—did there arise in my still dormant nature any sense of repugnance or dislike. He was so kind, so considerate, so indulgent, that I could not but be grateful, and by and by there grew up for him in my heart a real affection, the same in kind that I bore my father, though less in degree and weaker in the element of devotion.

There was much to interest and amuse me throughout the honeymoon and to break the pain of parting from father. Mr. West—Godfrey, as I must call him now—took me abroad, and as I had never been out of England before, every fresh place we went to was a new joy and a new wonder. I drank in the novel experiences eagerly—with a child's eagerness, seeing only the surface and the beautiful outsides of things; blind, altogether blind at that time, to the pain, the inner meaning, the hidden currents in much that I saw, and which later on was to burst for me through the bloom of life, and make the whole world a dark unanswerable question. And then, mingled with the novelty was a certain sense of importance; I rather liked when the waiters called me *Madame* (though alas! when we first arrived at a hotel they were uncomfortably apt to address me as *Mademoiselle*, which vexed me, I am glad to say, quite as much on Godfrey's account as on my own); and I took a certain pride in displaying my left hand to let people see that I was married.

We came home by way of Paris, and I think I enjoyed our stay there more than any other part of our travels. I was more at home with Godfrey by that time, for one thing, not so shy of saying what I would like to do and where I would like to go; and then, to the woman with a rich husband, is not Paris a material Paradise? I had told the fortune-teller, with some vehemence of assertion, that I was no materialist, but as I look back to those Paris days, I can well understand the quiet smile with which she met my disclaimer; for certainly the greater part of my happiness at that time was due to the satisfaction of the sense side of me; pleased by

the gaiety of the outdoor life of the streets, the charm of dining at restaurants, the new luxury of extravagance. I had never had much money to spend, and now the Paris shops, with a husband to buy me whatever I fancied, were bewildering. I thought myself sinfully extravagant, I remember, and yet, on looking back, I think I must have been somewhat of a poor little soul; so modest I was in my demands, so easily pleased, so quickly grateful. One of the things I liked best was the excitement of the parcels arriving at the hotel, and I can see my husband's face now as he stood by and watched me undoing them. Then I had my hair dressed at a *coiffeur's* in the Rue Royale, and I was half pleased and half ashamed to see myself looking so much more like a woman of the world than I had ever looked before, and more than half shy of appearing before Godfrey and before Léon, our room waiter. I went back to that same *coiffeur's* many, many years after, and I dare say he wondered why I was smiling at myself in the glass, not knowing that the face I saw before me was not the face *he* saw reflected, but a very different one, childlike and unlined, eager and wistful, flushed with pleasure, and with critically anxious eyes. Still, in spite of its many delights, I was not sorry when our stay in Paris came to an end. I wanted to get back to England, for England meant father. Mr. West was very kind and very good, and the constant change and movement of the first few weeks of marriage left me but little opportunity for reflection or loneliness; and yet there were times when I was homesick, intensely homesick, when I longed consciously and ardently for father's face and father's arms, and for the companionship which had been so much to me; and longed too, but unconsciously, unavowedly to myself, hardly knowing what the feeling was or meant, for the freedom which I had given up for ever. So when the time came for the return journey, my heart leapt up, and I think I tasted in that rush of joyfulness a contrasting flavour of the dim, carefully repressed regret which had been hidden till now in the background of my heart. It was a lovely day, the day we travelled home. The sea was so calm that I was

able to stay on deck during the whole of the crossing, and when we reached England the country looked very fair to me as we flashed through it in the mellow autumn light. I divided my time between reading *Bentley's Magazine*, which Godfrey bought for me at Dover, and looking out of the window, till we came within an appreciable distance of London; and then I think I did nothing but consult my watch and count the minutes which divided us from Charing Cross.

Father was at the station. I saw him even before he saw me, and I forgot Mr. West, forgot my little new travelling-bag with the gold-topped bottles, which I had never let out of my hand hitherto; I forgot that I was married at all; I was, oh, so glad to see father again. We stayed one night in London, and he came to the hotel and dined with us, and was bright and happy, with all the old gaiety back again in his eyes and speech. As we sat and talked, it came over me suddenly that this happiness was all owing to my marriage to Mr. West, and a great flood of thankfulness rose up in my heart, and a great rush of gratitude towards my husband, and I remember that on a quick impulse I took up his hand and kissed it. I can see him turn to me with a little wondering look on his face.

'Why, Annie!' and I can feel my cheeks grow hot and can hear my faltering, apologetic voice:

'It came to me—you have been so kind—he has been very good to me, father.'

Father looked very pleased—a little wistful perhaps—but very pleased as my eyes met his; but Godfrey still seemed as if he thought my proceeding an odd one, and I continued to feel somewhat confused in consequence.

When it was time for father to go, Godfrey left us alone for a little while, and then father said:

'You have made me happier to-night than I can tell. To see you happy—if you had not been happy I think it would have broken my heart, knowing——' I put my lips to his lips then and stopped the words with kisses.

'And you *are* happy, Annie.'

'Of course. How could I help it?' I said.

He went on, half laughing. 'The father must take the second place now'; then seriously: 'But that is what I want. That is my great joy—to see the husband first.'

I only kissed him; I did not tell, I never told him, the truth that was struggling and leaping within my heart; that all that I did and thought and looked sprang from the love of him; that I had kissed Godfrey's hand not for his own sake, but for father's; that my feeling for my husband was gratitude more than love; that the new slight affection had come, not instead, but because of the old, deeper, stronger one. I knew that the false belief made him happier than any assurance of my unaltered love for himself would have done, and I let him go away with it. That is a hard thing in life, to put a mask upon love's face because its tender gaze is better hidden from the eyes it longs to meet; to hold love dumb because true speech might awaken pain in the heart it yearns to rest in; to repress love's self for the sake of the one who is loved. Yet this must sometimes be, if love is to grow beyond selfishness to the heights of its true being.

The next day the weather had changed. It was gray and chilly, and when in the early afternoon we reached Draycomb Willow, the station for our village of Camp Willow, a thin, filmy rain was falling. The rain, however, had not kept the villagers at home; the best part of the population was at the station to receive us, and they cheered and God-blessed us as we took our way to the carriage. Some of the younger men wanted to take the horses out of the shafts and draw us themselves, but Godfrey dissuaded them from that very uncomfortable way of showing their good-will, and we drove through the village at a sharp trot. The church bells were pealing, and women stood at the cottage doors curtsying as we passed, and by the Green Stag, the chief inn of the place, there was an arch of evergreens across the road, and below the evergreens, red letters on a white ground: 'Health and Happiness to the Bridegroom and the Bride.' I was rather taken aback by all this, but enjoyed it too, though I felt somewhat shy. Godfrey turned to me and said:



‘See how pleased they are to see you.’

But I knew, of course, that it was all done for him and not for me; he was a good landlord and a large employer of labour, and very popular in the country.

We turned from the road into the long, winding, uphill drive that led to my new home. The rain had stopped now, and a little gleam of sunshine came out from a rift in the gray sky and rested upon the wet roof of the distant house, making it to glisten amidst the trees. I was glad the sun shone, though ever so feebly, for it seemed quiet and a little lonely in the drive after the festive stir of the village. I knew the house and grounds a little from having been there while we were living at ‘The Firs’; but everything seemed new and strange and different to me that day, and when we drew up before the flight of white steps with the stone balustrade, I felt as if I had never seen them before. A gray-headed, impressive butler, attended by two footmen, came out to open the carriage door, and the rest of the servants were drawn up in two lines in the hall. I had not expected this, and did not know what to do, but feeling that some sort of greeting was necessary, I bowed and smiled as I passed between the lines, and I remember thinking that I felt like the Princess of Wales. Then we were in an enormous drawing-room—I think the whole of ‘The Firs’ would have gone into it—and Godfrey was asking me if I would like to go up to my room, or if I would first have tea. Afternoon tea was quite a new institution in those days; I felt sure that it had not been known before in Godfrey’s house, and that the introduction of it was a concession to my supposed modern habits. As a matter of fact, it had never been formally established at home. We girls had kept up the custom of schoolroom tea, when schoolroom discipline was no more, and this once substantial meal, become less solid, had met the new fashion half way; but there never had been real, actual five-o’clock tea served in the drawing-room, and I was childishly pleased when I found it was to be one of the facts of Camp Holt. I said I would like to have tea at once, and I remember being

much impressed by the massiveness of the silver teapot and the extreme thinness of the bread and butter. Tea did not last very long—not quite so long as I should have liked, for I was hungry after my journey—and then Godfrey took me up a staircase of old dark wood, with massive, carved balustrades, and presently we were in a large and lofty bedroom with a wide bay window and a view across the wooded park to distant hills. I had a general impression of white and pink, of prettiness and comfort, and I said, I know: ‘What a charming room!’ but the dream feeling of my wedding day was a little upon me again, and nothing about me seemed quite real. When Godfrey left me alone, my surroundings gradually took on substance, and I saw clearly the furniture and the carpet, the wall-paper and the pictures and ornaments I afterwards came to know so well. It was a cheerful room, fresh and dainty and sweet, all in the way of a bedchamber, I told myself, that woman could desire, and I tried to feel immensely proud and pleased. Yet there was a little feeling of—I hardly know how to put it—a slight sense of having been caught and caged, in my heart, as I looked round and said to myself: ‘This is my home.’

## CHAPTER IV

*'Human, yet something which can ne'er  
Grow sad and wise.'*

I HAVE said that marriage did not develop me much, and I said truly ; yet undoubtedly many things that happened after, or in consequence of, my marriage, affected me very deeply. But I do not consider that I began really to mature—does anybody?—till I began to question ; and the questioning time, the conscious, deliberate questioning did not come till I had passed my thirtieth year. That is what I mean by saying that I remained more or less of a child for a long time after I became a wife ; nevertheless I had experiences which could not fail to awaken new sensations, emotions, and ideas, and so widened my world. The first of these new experiences was the coming home of Bertram. Godfrey had a letter about two months after our return home to say that he would be in England the following week, and would come straight to Camp Holt.

'Nice writing,' I said, taking up the envelope from the table by my husband's side.

'It's not Bertram's ; it's Mr. Lillingworth's—the man he's travelling with.'

'I wonder he didn't write himself,' I said idly, looking out of the window as I spoke at the damp, stripped trees. It was the month of November, and I was thinking that I did not care about trees when the first brief glory of autumn had given place to the later stages of decay.

'Bertram seldom writes. He is—both my boys, in fact, are—very bad at anything of the kind, very backward.'

‘Backward!’ I laughed. ‘You speak as if he were a little boy, and he’s—why, a year older than I am, is he not? He has not much chance of making up for lost time now.’

‘No, and yet I thought——’ My husband paused—and sighed in the pause, I fancied—‘I thought this trip might improve, develop him.’

‘I don’t know that travelling would be likely to improve people’s writing,’ I said. ‘How wet the trees are! and yet there has been no rain to-day.’

‘Lillingworth says——’ He stopped again, took up the letter, and was silent, re-reading it.

I returned to my work; I was not particularly interested in Bertram’s educational shortcomings; but, chancing to look up, I was struck by the worried look on Godfrey’s face. I could not bear people about me to be troubled, and I tried to say something cheering. I did not see that it mattered, I remarked, if his sons were not very learned or intellectual; so many men were neither the one nor the other, and so long as a man was good tempered and a good sportsman, he seemed to me to get on very well. Godfrey did not answer me immediately, but his brow cleared at last.

‘Well,’ he said, ‘in any case, I will see that he is not a trouble to *you*, Annie. I will get him into an office or something, and he shall not be in your way.’

I said that I was afraid poor Bertram would not fancy being shut up in an office, that if he did not like books, he probably cared only for an outdoor life; and indeed I began to feel rather sorry for this unscholarly stepson, and very anxious to see what he was like. I pictured him as a merry, hunting-squire sort of type, and I remember thinking to myself that Godfrey was rather hard on him.

He, or rather they, for Mr. Lillingworth came with him to spend a couple of days at Camp Holt, arrived at the close of a dull December day. My dream of a country squire disappeared the instant I set eyes on the reality. This was a tall, overgrown-looking young man, with a black beard encircling the whole of his face, and an awkward manner and

gait. I thought of his father's description of him, the description I had laughed at—backward, and I saw that it fitted him exactly. He seemed backward indeed ; like a boy who had grown physically into manhood, and yet was still a boy. When I shook hands and said that I was glad to see him, he grinned ; it certainly was a grin—I could not call it a smile—which exposed his white, rather large teeth ; and as soon as he conveniently could, he shuffled away from me and began to play with the cat.

At dinner he did not speak much, seeming chiefly occupied with his food ; it was Mr. Lillingworth who told us about the places he and Bertram had visited together. Sometimes he appealed to the latter in describing buildings or scenes, as when, in talking about Rome, he spoke of the Vatican.

'You remember the Vatican, Bertram?' he said. 'You enjoyed seeing it, enjoyed the statues.'

Bertram raised his eyes from his plate ; they had rather a vacant look, but lighted up at the word *statues*. 'Oh yes,' he answered, 'there was one with three men and a snake, all twisted in and out.'

'The Laocoon,' said Mr. Lillingworth ; then turning to me, 'A wonderful piece of work ; the anatomy——'

'And there was one man with no head or legs,' continued Bertram, also addressing me.

'I suppose the celebrated *torso*,' I said. 'Oh, how I should like to go to Rome !'

'And men with spears and shields,' Bertram went on, laying down his knife and fork, 'and women too ; there was one with a bow and arrow. And they were all naked, except——'

'I will take you to Rome some day, Annie,' Godfrey broke in. 'Bertram, Burge is waiting to take away your plate.'

After that, Mr. Lillingworth did not call upon Bertram's reminiscences for some time, and when he did, Bertram answered vaguely, as if he hardly followed the conversation, and certainly was not interested in it. Several times during dinner I found his eyes—strange, dull eyes they were—fixed upon me ; and afterwards in the drawing-room, as he sat

twirling his pocket handkerchief in his large, ungainly hands, I was again conscious of his gaze. At last he rose and came across to me.

'Do you play draughts?' he asked.

I hesitated; I had played as a child, not since; and I did not in truth feel inclined to settle down to a game with my not too attractive stepson.

Godfrey came to my rescue. 'You must not bother Annie,' he said. 'She does not care to play.'

'Here is the *Illustrated London News*,' put in Mr. Lillingworth. 'There are all sorts of things in it that you will like to see.'

'Come here near the fire, Annie,' my husband went on. 'I know you are longing to go on with that new novel of Mrs. Henry Wood's, and we need not make a stranger of Stanhope.' Stanhope was Mr. Lillingworth.

Here was my opportunity for release, but while these sentences were spoken, my heart relented, and a sort of pity crept into it for the young man before me; he looked so awkward standing there with his tall form and his unintelligent face. 'No, thank you; I am going to play draughts with Bertram,' I said.

A gleam of pleasure brightened the stolid face. 'I shall win; I am a very good draught player,' said Bertram. He went over to a cabinet at the further end of the room. 'Are they still in the same drawer, father?'

'Yes, but——' Godfrey came to my side; he looked, I thought, far more vexed than the occasion warranted, and indeed I did not see why he need be vexed at all. 'I won't have you victimised,' he said in a low voice.

'But I want to play,' answered I, and looked up at him with the smile that always brought me my own way.

So we played draughts, Bertram and I together. He was not a very pleasant playmate; he became foolishly exultant when he won, and uncomfortably sullen when he lost. I soon let him win every game; I did not like his face when he scowled, and that was the only way to get rid of the scowl.

'What a bear he is !' I was thinking to myself all the time ; 'a regular lout. I wonder how Godfrey came to have such an uncouth son !'

I was rather tired after those games of draughts, and when I went up to bed, sat down by my bedroom fire before undressing. He certainly was a lout, this stepson ; his stupid face was before me as I sat, and I could not help congratulating myself that he was not to live at home. 'I do hope the other one is more interesting,' I thought ; 'I don't mind people not being clever, but this young man seems almost like an——' I interrupted my thought sharply by jumping to my feet and beginning to undress rapidly. As I undressed I gave myself a scolding. I was fastidious and critical, I said. It was very natural that the young man should be shy and awkward and ill at ease this first evening, and no doubt it was disconcerting to come home and find a stepmother, a year younger than yourself, installed in your own mother's place. When I said my prayers, I added a new petition : 'Please God make me nice to Bertram !' and then I looked out the text where it says that whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire ; and having thus battled with a certain sinking of the heart, which I could not quite overcome, I got into bed. When Godfrey came up I pretended to be asleep. I was afraid he would speak of Bertram, which I did not wish him to do, because I did not want to hurt his feelings, for, in spite of the prayer and the text, I could not think of anything to say which was at the same time gratifying and at all near the truth. So when Godfrey came and stood by the bed, I lay as still as a mouse, concentrating all my thought upon keeping my eyelids steady. When I was a child, I had been told a story of a lady who had been roused in the night by the entrance of a burglar. The burglar, with a candle in his hand, came to her bedside and held the candle close to her face, to make sure that she was asleep, watching her eyelids to see if they flickered, before deciding whether he would kill or stun her to prevent her giving the alarm before he had possessed himself of her belongings.

The lady stood the test and remained perfectly still, and so escaped unharmed. The story made a great impression upon me, and I had often practised trying to keep my eyes quite steady, so as to avoid any flicker of movement in the closed lids. But it was a very different thing to do it in the dark, and under the scrutiny of only an imaginary burglar; now, with a real man and a real candle, it was much more difficult, and I felt every second as if my eyeballs must roll convulsively, and my eyelids gave an undeniable twitch. I came through the ordeal triumphantly, nevertheless; Godfrey turned away in silence—I don't suppose he had stood by me for more than half a minute, though it seemed a long time—and I fell really asleep, and slept without pause till break of day, which, in December, does not mean a very early hour.



## CHAPTER V

‘How to ask, and what thing to know.’

I DO not much like to think of the next day, the day after Bertram's arrival. All through the uncomfortable hours of it, I strove to blind my mental sight and blunt my natural perception, and all through those hours Bertram made the task increasingly difficult. At breakfast—it seems a little thing, but it was the little things that bit by bit made up the sum of my enforced conviction—at breakfast he drank so noisily and ate so greedily, that I was afraid to meet the eyes either of my husband or my guest, lest my glance should convey and theirs acknowledge the sort of ashamed discomfort which hung in the atmosphere. Later on, I found him bouncing a ball on the terrace behind the house as a child might have done, and with all a child's interest. There is charm in a child's play, something natural and pleasant, but in this grown man, the sight somehow was pitiful, and I turned at once away from it. I need not go in detail through the day; nothing very striking happened, but every incident, however trivial, in which Bertram was concerned, added to the impression of disquietude which had taken root on the previous evening. I avoided my husband's company, and even his eyes, throughout the earlier part of the day, and I avoided, as far as possible, the whisperings of my own consciousness; but in the late afternoon this fencing with myself and with circumstances suddenly gave way to a determination to take the bull by the horns, and to have my doubts made certainties or cleared away.

I remember that James, one of the footmen, was lighting the lamp in the hall as I passed through it on my way to Godfrey's library, and I can see the December sky grow instantly darker through the uncurtained window as the light sprang up within. I can see Godfrey sitting in the dusk by the fire, and the red glow from the flames that made a fitful light in the room. And I can almost see—I can quite certainly *feel*—myself, girlish, diffident, a little nervous, a little fearful of giving and receiving pain, but with a directness of intention which left room for no hesitation, crossing the floor to where my husband turned in his chair to receive me.

‘Is it you, Annie?’

‘Yes; I want to speak to you.’ I remember, as he rose and drew forward a low chair for me close to his own, I remember thinking that if it were father, how much easier it would have been to speak of my uneasiness. But I pulled myself up; it was not my father, it was my husband, to whom in this, the first actual perplexity of my life, I had come for enlightenment; and a very good and a very kind husband too, I reiterated to myself, as I sat down beside him.

‘What is it?’ he asked, but hardly gave me time to answer, relieving me from the difficulty of beginning the subject in a way for which I was truly grateful. ‘I think I can guess—that it’s what I was thinking about when you came in. Is it Bertram?’

‘Yes,’ I said. ‘I am puzzled—I can’t help wondering. And then I plumped it out, the suspicion that had been gathering force all through the uneasy day. ‘Is he quite right in his mind?’

There was just the tiniest pause; I heard the clock tick four times—the tick of it was unusually loud, I thought; and then my husband answered.

‘No,’ he said; his voice was very low; ‘I’m afraid——’ then louder: ‘No, it’s better to say out the truth; there can be no doubt that he is not—not quite like other men.’

A horrid sort of feeling came all over me. I had known the truth before he spoke it, but the speaking of it gave me

a sensation of being hot and cold, and of everything being intensely real and intensely unreal, all at the same time. I sat quite still and silent. I shrank from the abnormal with the vague terror which constantly shadows the unknown, and anything which verged on the domain of madness held for me in those sensitive, shielded days a subtle horror. The horror had begun in my childish dreams; that woman I had dreamed of with the white, unearthly face, she was mad; and an idiot whom we used to meet sometimes during our walks was a persistent haunter of my sleep in the nursery days. Godfrey was speaking.

‘I ought to have told you—at first—before we were married. But the doctors gave me such hopes—that it was only backwardness, a late development; I thought when he came back, he would be all right. He has been travelling for eighteen months.’

All at once the hot and cold feeling fell away from me, and I began to feel simply homesick, felt simply a longing to rush away to father and the rather shabby house we used to live in, and be safe and happy and free from the disagreeable fact of Bertram with his clouded mind. I suppose most people want to do that—to run away and hide from troubles; their first troubles, I mean, because later on one knows that it is impossible and that the only thing to do is to stand up to them. But I was only twenty-two then, and had known but the ordinary, daylight side of life, the side that so many people say is the only one; I had not come across any of the dark and strange things which, one is constantly told, do not happen in real life, but which in truth make up a large part of life’s realities. So I sat there feeling rather miserable, selfishly miserable, till it occurred to me—I think it was something in his voice which roused me to it—that Godfrey was unhappy too, and then my ordinary senses and feelings seemed to come back to me. I realised that he must be very much disappointed and very sorrowful about his son, and that he must feel awkward and uncomfortable at having to tell me about him, and I remember laying my hand on his and saying:

‘Please don’t mind on my account, it doesn’t matter at all’; and I added, though I am afraid not in a very hopeful voice: ‘Perhaps he will improve.’

Then Godfrey got up and drew me to him and said I was the dearest child and the most generous soul he had ever known (I thought to myself, ‘If you knew what I felt like a minute ago, you would not think so!’), and said that in any case his sons should be no burden on my life, should cast no shadow upon it, and that though he was disappointed that Bertram had not improved more, he still hoped they would be fit for some sort of work.

The plural terms in which he spoke awoke a new disquietude. ‘They!’ I said, and I am afraid I gasped a little, though I did my best to speak quite calmly. ‘Is Ellis the— the same?’ Godfrey left me and began to walk up and down. I took up the poker and made a bright blaze which lighted the ever-darkening room, and all the time he answered, I still kept on stirring the coals.

‘No, not the same. He has been dull and backward all through his school life, certainly, but less noticeably so than Bertram. And he has tastes—a great aptitude for natural history; from what his tutor writes I have great hopes that—not that he will be very intelligent, but still not—not deficient.’

‘I dare say he will turn out all right,’ I said, trying to speak heartily; and then I laid down the poker, and I shall never forget how relieved I was when at that moment the door opened and James came in with a taper.

I went to my own little sitting-room in a downcast mood; and all through dinner, though Mr. Lillingworth told some amusing stories, I found it difficult to seem as if nothing were the matter. I felt aggrieved with fate; and fate’s instrument, in the person of Bertram, inspired me with a sort of irritated disgust. Poor Bertram! He was entirely unconscious of my feelings, and after dinner produced the draughtboard and came over to me with an undoubting assumption of my willingness to play with him, which, I am ashamed to say,

sequence of days, in which the same things were done at the same hours, with meals always punctual, during which only subjects within a certain range were discussed, a range which did not include the things I most cared to talk about. He liked to potter about the grounds, making no plans of improvement or of change, hardly admiring, not actively enjoying, but simply, as it seemed to me, taking note of his possessions; he liked to drive from two till four o'clock, behind horses of never-varying pace, the same series of well-known drives; he liked, in the evening before dinner, to talk over accounts and expenditure with his steward, and after dinner to settle himself in an armchair with the *Times*, and then fall asleep. He liked an even, unemotional flow of existence, a sort of mental dusk, where the light was sufficient to find the way along, but not strong enough to stimulate interest or impel to exertion. Of all this, I was hardly, as I have said, conscious at that time, and yet a dim sense of depression had begun to descend upon me, and Mr. Lillingworth's visit was like a breath of air from the outer world of thrilling, hurrying life. I had a little talk with him before he went away. I was standing warming myself by the fire in the great hall as he came downstairs, and he crossed the carpeted floor and stood beside me. That carpet in the hall, by the way, was always an eyesore to me. I felt that the oaken floor should have been polished and left bare, or covered only partially by rugs; but it was Godfrey's idea of comfort to have it carpeted, and a carpet, accordingly, of early Victorian design, spread its inartistic pile from wall to wall.

Mr. Lillingworth came and stood beside me and held out his hands to the blaze. 'Abominable weather,' he said.

'Yes,' I answered, with a little shiver, glancing through the window at the December sky; 'it's gloomy in the house, and not inviting to go out.'

'The country *is* gloomy in winter.'

'Oh, not for everybody; not if you ride and hunt and shoot; not if you are the sort of person that—that I thought Bertram would be——'

He looked at me a little curiously. 'Did you not know the sort of person he was going to be?'

My loyalty—it had not indeed failed; it was my caution which had been at fault—my loyalty stood up at his words. 'Oh yes, of course, in a way, but one so constantly imagines people different from what they turn out to be; one so seldom realises anybody beforehand; and I had fancied somehow that Bertram would be more—more athletic than he is.'

'He is not athletic at all, I am afraid,' said Mr. Lillingworth, with a half smile.

'No. And then we hoped this trip would improve him so much—develop him. It is a great disappointment to my husband, very hard on him.'

'Not half so hard as it is on you,' Mr. Lillingworth said impetuously. 'For a young, beau—for a chi—for a woman,' he ended up after stumbling about over several words, 'to be saddled with two half imbecile stepsons is—is abominable.'

'A wife, Mr. Lillingworth,' I said, with my most dignified air, 'is willing to share all her husband's troubles, and would never be disposed to consider his children abominable.'

He reddened, but did not answer, and after a rather awkward pause: 'Besides, Ellis,' I went on, 'is less im—is more intelligent than his brother. He has—has—in fact, tastes.' I was thinking of what Godfrey had said about him.

'Tastes?'

'Yes; natural history,' I said, a little faltering, for Mr. Lillingworth's tone was incredulous.

'Oh, collecting beetles, yes; he likes doing that.'

'You know him, I suppose? though not so well as Bertram, of course.'

'No; I have only seen him for a day or two at a time when I have been down here. He is not so tall as Bertram—nor quite so plain.'

'Nor so—I mean he is more intelligent,' I hazarded.

'Oh yes; less noticeably—the other thing. What a brute I am,' Mr. Lillingworth broke out suddenly, 'to speak so disagreeably when you want consolation.'

'You mistake,' I answered; 'I am not aware of being in the least in want of consolation. I merely happened to touch upon the character of a young man whom you have seen and I have not. Pray make no excuses.'

I turned to move away then, but he implored me to stop, saying that if he had been rude, it was unwittingly, and that he begged me to forgive him. Forgiveness has never come very hardly to me, and Mr. Lillingworth looked so sincerely penitent that I came back to the fire; all the more willingly that I really liked him, and that it was pleasant to talk to somebody who was both young and mentally sound. He began then to speak of his travels, and to tell me about what he called the mummeries of the Roman Church. He soon held my attention. Brought up in an atmosphere exclusively, though not severely, Protestant (for father could not have been severe about anything), I had never been inside a Roman Catholic church, and some of the ritual and ceremonies he described seemed to me very interesting. 'I wonder what it all means?' I said.

'Means? Nothing at all; mere rubbish.'

'But it must mean something,' I persisted, 'or must have meant something once. There must be something behind everything.'

'There's nothing behind priests' mummeries, that you may depend on,' affirmed Mr. Lillingworth. 'The Latin means something, of course, but fancy having services in a language none of the congregation understands.'

'Is it in Latin everywhere—all over the world—in England too?' I asked.

'Yes, just the same.'

'Well, at any rate, wherever you went, you would feel at home; the words would be always familiar; and I suppose people understand the general sense of it.'

'The general sense is often nonsense—prayers to the Virgin and saints, and absurdities of that kind.'

'And then,' I went on, following my own thought and not Mr. Lillingworth's, 'it seems to me often that sounds have

an effect in themselves, that certain words, apart from their meaning, just the sound of them, produce a particular impression, are soothing or—or—— Don't you know what I mean?'

'No, indeed I don't. Words are nothing to me apart from their meaning,' said the young man; and he looked so uncomprehending that I did not try any more to make him understand the idea I had tried to formulate.

Mr. Lillingworth left soon after lunch, and I recollect a distinct little feeling of blankness as he got into the dogcart and drove away. Part of the blankness was due, perhaps, to the rather dismal weather. December, when it has not the brightness, the crisp, keen cold of frost, is a particularly dreary month, with its short days and heavy skies; and this first year of my married life it was—or seems so to me as I look back—unusually gray and sunless. We drove out, that afternoon, in the close carriage, and as Godfrey's rheumatism was beginning to trouble him, both the windows were up, and by and by they became covered with a thin veil of mist, and I saw the landscape all dim and blurred as we passed along the muddy roads. I thought to myself how different it was from the days when I had constantly had to walk through mire and slush, and when the price of a drive, even in a four-wheeled cab, was a matter for serious consideration; and I reflected that I was wonderfully well off to have a husband who provided me with every kind of luxury. Yet, as the stuffiness of the atmosphere by and by began to make me yawn, I could not prevent myself from envying the footman on the box his privilege of breathing the fresh, open air, and presently, as I developed the fidgets, the dog which ran beside the carriage, free to stretch and exercise his limbs. I changed my position so often that Godfrey asked me at last if anything was the matter. I said no, nothing, only that my limbs were rather stiff, and that when we got to the lodge gate, I thought I would get out and walk up the drive.

'It is very wet underfoot,' Godfrey said, 'and it would be a pity to get your feet damp and catch cold.'



'Oh, I have very thick boots,' I insisted, 'and you know how much good exercise does me.'

'I wonder you did not go out this morning,' Godfrey returned. 'If you begin to walk now, it will make you late for tea.'

His tone was just a little querulous, I thought, and I did not want to vex him, so I at once said I would drive all the way; and I resolved that after to-day I would always go for a walk in the morning. 'If I had gone out before lunch,' I reflected, 'instead of being lazy and talking to Mr. Lillingworth, probably I should not have had the fidgets now.' The reflection did not prevent me from looking with longing eyes at Scamp, the retriever, as he plunged into and out of bushes on the way from the lodge to the house; and as soon as we had alighted, I rushed upstairs to my room two steps at a time to try and get some of that horrid cramped, prickly sort of feeling out of my limbs.

As I came downstairs, Bertram passed into the hall from the side door. His boots were thickly covered with mud, and he was splashed up to the waist. 'Been for a walk?' I said.

'Yes; a jolly tramp.' He followed me into the drawing-room. 'Is tea ready? It makes you hungry. I had all the dogs except Scamp, and they——'

'You must change your things before sitting down to tea,' Godfrey interrupted. 'Just look at your boots! They're disgraceful!'

Bertram's eyes moved from the bread and butter upon which they had been eagerly fixed, downward to his feet, and his face grew gloomy; but he never thought of parleying with his father, and turned at once and left the room. I was half glad and half sorry; sorry because he looked so hungry and so foolishly downcast when he found he could not at once begin upon his food; and glad that he should be taught better manners—his uncouth ways jarred upon me. Godfrey and I began tea without him, and indeed we had finished before he came back, and ate up

the remaining bread and butter and all the cakes in the silver basket.

Little incidents like those I have just related come back to me as I write, clear and distinct from out the mists of memory. Trivial they are, and unimportant, hardly worthy of notice or record, yet they formed such a large part of the life I had entered upon, that any picture of it without them would be but half filled in. So I give them, just as they come to me ; and indeed, in their sum, they may account as much for my present way of looking at and thinking of things as the bigger events which from time to time disturbed their monotonous course.

## CHAPTER VII

*' Nous espérons selon nos désirs ; nous agissons selon nos craintes.'*

IT must not be supposed that all this time I had forgotten the fortune-teller, or failed to notice how far her prophecies tallied with the events which had come to pass. There were long intervals indeed, in that year which followed my interview with her, during which she was altogether absent from my thoughts ; but from time to time her face and her words rose up before my mental ears and eyes ; and when father's misfortune descended suddenly upon the careless happiness of my girl's life, it was with a positive shock that I recognised in it the realisation of her first foretelling. 'You have another year of the life you are leading now. Then comes trouble, marriage, and a death.' The pregnant sentence rushed into my mind like a wave of fate breaking upon the sheltered shore of my youth's enjoyment. It was just a little over the year of promised peace, and now here was the prophesied trouble stern and actual beside me. Marriage had followed soon ; in that too the sibyl was proved trustworthy ; and by that marriage some of her succeeding and hitherto ambiguous sounding words had become pointed and clear. 'There will be age where there should be youth,' she had said. The phrase had repeated itself often during the hurried weeks of my engagement, and at intervals during my travels abroad ; and it said itself—surely, it seemed to me, it said itself, for I certainly tried not to say it—it said itself oftener than was at all convenient, now that we were settled at Camp Holt, especially on occasions such as I have referred

to in the last chapter, when Godfrey's sober ways of life were at variance with the eager impulses of my youth. And its context too, since Bertram's appearance upon the scene, was often in my mind : 'There will be three where there should be one.' The stepsons were pointed at there, and I was fully conscious of the implication in those two little words, *should be*, for marriage would have been much easier, I felt, had there been only my husband to consider. Yet it was not the existence of the stepsons, it was not my husband's love of routine and his little methodical ways which at this time chiefly concerned me ; it was not the fulfilled prophecies, which, when the thought of the fortune-teller recurred to my mind, aroused my greatest interest. No ; that which excited both my curiosity and my dread, that which put foreboding into the winter skies, and gave the winds a chillier touch, lay in the prophecy of the death which was to follow my marriage. Whether the gloom that from time to time threatened the cheerfulness of my mind at this period was due altogether to this prophecy, acting upon a mind sensitive to impressions ; whether it resulted partly from a certain prescience of disaster which has come to me from time to time throughout the course of my life ; or whether the mere dreariness of the weather affected me, I cannot tell. Certain it is that I had a tendency to low spirits in the last month of the year which saw my marriage, and a recurrent sense of impending trouble.

The trouble was not far distant then. As I draw near to it, as it lifts its head out of the past and looks me clearly in the face, I am half tempted to leap over it, to pass it by untold, save for the bare mention of its coming ; half tempted, on the other hand, to rush forward and grapple quickly with the telling of it. But I put such temptations by ; in its due course it must find its record, in its place I must set it down ; and I have not yet come quite to that place. I must first speak about Ellis, and of his coming to Camp Holt.

He came home two days before Christmas, and Bertram

went with the groom in the dogcart to the station to meet him. The brothers were very fond of each other, Godfrey told me, and I should have known of the affection, on the elder one's part, at any rate, without the telling, for Bertram grew wildly excited as the time drew near for Ellis's arrival, and on the day he was expected, actually left an egg uneaten in the egg basket at breakfast.

The lunch bell was ringing as the dogcart drew up before the door, and I, on my way downstairs, hurried on into the hall, then paused midway between the staircase and the door, half fearful, half curious to see what this second stepson would be like. The front door was already open, and Burge, the butler, and one of the footmen were engaged in taking bags and wraps out of the trap. I saw Ellis mount the steps by his brother's side, a featureless figure at first, outlined against the cold, clouded sky. He was shorter than Bertram, stouter too, and moved, I thought, more briskly and with less awkwardness. The brothers came towards me side by side.

'Here he is!' cried Bertram, his face beaming. 'I've brought him.'

I came forward a step or two, putting out my hand. 'How do you do?'

Ellis shook it heartily. 'I'm very glad to see you,' he said.

It sounded a little as if he were the host and I the person arriving, but my chief thought at the time was one of pleasure at finding that his manners were less awkward than Bertram's. I could see his face now, of course, and I thought that that too was an improvement upon his brother's. It was almost as heavy, but it was less vacant; there was a gleam in his eyes that I had almost hailed as intelligence, and then my judgment hesitated; was it only cunning perhaps? These impressions, vague and quick, were broken in upon by the arrival of Godfrey. His face was anxious, I thought, as he crossed the hall towards us; his eyes had a keen, questioning look. 'Well, Ellis, my boy!' The words were hearty; the tone, I fancied, had as much inquiry as welcome in it.

'How do you do, father? I hope you're quite well.'

'Quite well, thank you. Let's have a look at you.' He turned Ellis towards the light. 'You've been doing well at Mr. Churchill's, I hope? getting on?'

'Mr. Churchill said I had made considerable progress,' Ellis replied, with a grave composure.

'He's a fine fellow,' said Bertram to me, with a grin of *naïf* admiration.

'Lunch is waiting,' Godfrey remarked. 'You had better go up and wash your hands, you two, and mind you don't waste time.'

They scuttled away upstairs, like two schoolboys, and Godfrey and I went on into the dining-room. My husband looked at me across the dishes, and I gave him an answering nod and smile. I could not say anything, because of Burge and James and William, whose impassive countenances were ranged at intervals round the table, but I tried to convey to him by my look that I was sure Ellis had improved and would turn out well. The sons were longer preparing for luncheon than their father approved of; he glanced once or twice with increasing impatience towards the door, and at last told Burge to go and hurry them down. He also seemed a little impatient with me, I thought, which struck me as somewhat unreasonable, as it was certainly not my fault that the brothers took so long to wash their hands. Since that time I have learned that other husbands besides Godfrey are apt to visit a feeling of vexation or injury upon their wives, however little these may have had to do with causing the annoyance; but at that time the fact was new to me. Father, however vexed he may have been, had never given me any but gentle words and looks, and I felt, to speak the truth, a trifle resentful at my husband's manner. My resentment, however, soon passed away; I told myself that Godfrey was nervous and anxious, that his nervousness and anxiety were chiefly on my account, and that he had no intention of being impatient.

The young men, when at last they appeared, ushered in by

Burge, soon made up for lost time. Ellis was not such a voracious eater as his brother, but he did not fail in point of appetite; as for Bertram, he compensated himself for the loss of that egg at breakfast many times over. His father took no notice of him; it was becoming more and more his habit not to notice Bertram if he could help it; but he addressed Ellis several times in the course of the meal. The latter answered quite sensibly; not with animation, nor with any great show of intelligence, nor did he initiate or pursue any subject; but his replies were relative to the questions put to him, and my spirits began to rise. This was much better than Bertram, I thought, and the hope sprang up that Ellis's alleged backwardness might prove to be nothing but backwardness after all.

After luncheon I followed Godfrey into the library to tell him so.

'I am sure you must think Ellis improved,' I said. 'He seems to me quite—quite reasonable.'

'You think so?' with lightening brow. 'He seems to me too, to be fairly sensible—yes, I am sure he has improved. Churchill said so, indeed, in his letter.'

'He may have a good effect upon Bertram,' I went on hopefully; 'the being with him, the companionship; and they are evidently, as you told me, very fond of one another.'

'Yes, they are certainly that, though they used to fall out sometimes.' Godfrey glanced at the clock. 'You will be ready by half-past two?'

'Oh yes'; and I left him and went upstairs.

## CHAPTER VIII

‘The face is not made of the soul, yet is fashioned by it.’

I PUT on a bonnet that afternoon, instead of the hat I usually wore when driving alone with Godfrey, for we were going to return one of the visits which had been paid us, and in those days a bonnet with strings tied under the chin was indispensable to the correctness of a married woman's attire. I set out joyfully. I was a sociable little person, and though I was sometimes and in some ways shy, I very much liked to see and talk to my fellow-creatures. I still had the sense—I wonder if all young people have it?—that everywhere I went and everybody I met might lead to an adventure, and though I tried to crush this sense out of being, telling myself that now that I was married nothing more could ever happen to me, it still continued active, and lent a double interest to every new place I went to, every fresh person I met. To-day I did not think that our visit would be particularly exciting, and yet the idea that it *might* lead to something interesting was strong in me as we set off. We were going to call upon an old bachelor, a man who lived alone some five or six miles from Camp Holt, and who mixed but little in the society of the neighbourhood. As we drove along the heavy roads, I plied my husband with questions. ‘I almost wonder he called on us,’ I said, after Godfrey had told me of Sir Reginald Creagh's secluded habits, ‘if he cares so little for seeing people.’

‘I called on him when he settled here,’ answered Godfrey, ‘so I suppose he thought it would be only polite to call on my wife.’



‘Has he lived here long?’

‘Two or three years. He is a retired Indian civilian, and settled down at Berkstone when he returned from India.’

India was chiefly associated in my mind at that time with liver complaint, and I did not think Sir Reginald would be a valuable addition to our acquaintance; but when Godfrey, in answer to my continued questioning, went on to tell me that he had been knighted for the splendid way in which he had behaved in a famine, my interest in him revived, and I was glad when, on reaching Berkstone, the servant said that his master was at home. It was an unpretentious house, not very big, white and square, and the hall inside was square too. As we crossed it, I saw advancing towards me an elderly gentleman with white hair and whiskers, and a girl, slim, a little above middle height, with brown waving hair smoothed back under a bonnet, and inquiring grey-blue eyes. It was an instant before I recognised the figures as Godfrey and myself, and the recognition came with a shock; I had not realised till then how great a difference in age was apparent between my husband and myself. I knew that I had frequently been mistaken for his daughter; but this girl in the glass—such was the spontaneous, momentary impression created by that sudden vision—might have been his grandchild. I would have my next bonnet made in less frivolous fashion and with wider strings, to give me a more matronly air, I thought to myself, as I followed the manservant into the drawing-room. I say ‘drawing-room,’ but it was not the least like any room described by that name that I had ever seen. There were a great many books on shelves, musty, learned-looking volumes, not at all of the kind that I was accustomed to consider interesting; there were very few ornaments, and such as there were, were of a kind I had only seen hitherto in museums. The furniture was dark and plain; the walls were unpapered, stained merely, and of a pale green tint; there was a very rich, many-coloured carpet on the floor, and it was this carpet perhaps which gave the room the air of comfort which it possessed, in spite of the

somewhat stiff and bare effect it produced upon me. There were no pictures on the walls ; but over the mantelpiece, instead of the high gilt-framed mirror which at Camp Holt occupied the corresponding position, was a large photograph, a portrait, life-size, of a woman's face. I have described the furniture somewhat in detail, but I must have observed those details in a half-unconscious way, for it seems to me that as soon as I entered the room my whole attention was absorbed by the photograph. It was a striking face, neither young nor beautiful ; force was its main characteristic, an indomitable and dominating strength of will and purpose. The features were massive, the brow broad, the contour of the face full ; the eyes, somewhat protruding, seemed to pierce with an intensity as of life. It was not an English face, of that I felt convinced, but I could not determine its nationality. I was about to ask Godfrey if he knew whose the portrait was, when the door opened and our host came in.

I had expected to see a half-decrepit sort of man, for I had understood that he was not many years my husband's junior, and I had always been told that India aged people very early ; but this man looked fully ten or twelve years younger than Godfrey. He was tall, unusually so, spare and upright, was well made, and carried himself well ; his face, clean shaven, was deeply lined, grave, and a little stern, but keenly alive ; his eyes were both penetrating and inscrutable. A sort of thrill went through me. 'This,' I said to myself, 'is the most interesting person we have been to call on yet, even though he *is*, of course, not young.'

Sir Reginald began conversation in quite the orthodox English way, by speaking of the weather. I think I was disappointed ; I do not quite know what I expected him to say, but certainly nothing so commonplace as remarks upon the north-west wind. I sat silent at first, studying him—it was always a mania of mine to study faces—but remembering my manners, I gave my little push to keep the ball of conversation rolling, and said I thought December was always a horrid month. 'Everything is over,' I said, 'and nothing has begun.

There is nothing even to regret in it, as there is in the autumn, and nothing to hope for, as in the spring.'

'I should not think you needed the spring to give you hope,' Sir Reginald said, a kindly look in his keen eyes.

'Oh, but I do—as regards the weather, at any rate. I spend the whole winter in looking forward to the summer months. Why should you think I do not need the hope of spring?'

'Because I should have thought you carried it within you. Your face looks to me like the embodiment of hope.' He said it quite gravely, not at all as if he meant to pay me a compliment, so that my dignity, sensitive as it was, was unable to feel offended; and then he proceeded to offer us refreshment. Had I had my way, I should have accepted the offer, for I felt that afternoon tea was foreign to his bachelor establishment, and wished to see what he would give us instead; but Godfrey declined it, saying that we must be making our way home.

As we rose to go, I found my eyes drawn again to the portrait over the mantelpiece, and involuntarily said:

'That is a remarkable face.'

'It belongs to a remarkable woman.'

'A—a personal friend?' I hazarded.

'A personal and very dear friend,' was all Sir Reginald answered, and I felt that I could ask no more.

He came out to the carriage door with us, and I thought his face pleasant as he smiled good-bye from the step of his house.

'I am afraid you found him tiresome,' remarked Godfrey, as we drove away.

I had been about to break out into some rather enthusiastic expressions of the interest the visit had aroused in me, but Godfrey's words discouraged me, and I merely said:

'Oh no.'

'A queer chap,' my husband went on; 'reserved and difficult to get on with; peculiar, in fact.'

I knew from his saying that, that he did not like our late host, for 'peculiar,' in Godfrey's vocabulary, meant without the pale of his approval; and I therefore turned the conversation

away from Sir Reginald, and spoke of more ordinary things, such as the state of the roads, and the excellent way in which the new cook had made the curry for lunch. But presently when my husband had fallen into a doze, as sometimes happened during our drives, I let my thoughts go back to my new acquaintance. What did he mean by saying I looked like an embodiment of hope? I had never before considered that hope was a particularly strong factor in my view of life, but as I reflected, I began to think that perhaps after all I was of a rather sanguine disposition. About my stepsons, for instance; why, I even hoped that Bertram might some day become normal; I hoped that Ellis was already not far from being so, and I hoped that this was the case. . . . My thoughts were interrupted by the sight of the two brothers walking side by side on the roadway. They strode along, against the wind, walking very fast, and evidently without speech. As the carriage passed, they looked up and took off their hats; on Bertram's face was a faint shadow of the grin with which he was wont to greet me; Ellis's remained impassive. I do not know whether it is merely an idea of my own, and baseless, or whether there is any foundation for it in fact, but I seem to have noticed that people with minds imperfectly balanced or clouded have a tendency to walk either very fast or very slowly; they moon along, or rush forward at full speed. At any rate, my stepsons were covering the ground very quickly, and I found afterwards that it was their habit, when they were not merely loafing, to walk at an unusually fast pace. They arrived home both hungry and thirsty after their exercise in the keen wind, and I could not help finding it rather tiresome, when first one and then the other kept on handing me his cup for fresh supplies of tea, and when I had more than once to summon Burge to bring more milk and more bread and butter. Bertram vexed me a little too, by first upsetting some tea into his saucer, and then spilling the contents of the saucer over the dainty little table-cloth, which I had myself made for the afternoon tea-table. But his very clumsiness restored my good-humour, for his attempts to wipe up what he

had spilled with a not too clean pocket handkerchief, were of such a nature as to move me to uncontrollable laughter. Then I was filled with remorse for laughing at him, and so got over my fit of impatience. Poor Bertram! I did indeed try to be kind and patient towards him; with perhaps too much success, for my efforts led to unfortunate results, as will have to be told by and by.

## CHAPTER IX

'I used to sit and look at my life  
As it rippled and ran.'

THE orphan daughter of a cousin of Godfrey's came to spend Christmas at Camp Holt, and arrived the day after our visit to Berkstone, that is to say, on Christmas eve. She was a girl about my own age, but with twice my self-confidence, and at first I was disposed to be shy with her, feeling a little overwhelmed by her flow of conversation; she appeared to have no difficulty in finding something to say, and rattled easily on during tea, which was waiting when she reached the house. But it was not possible to remain long on the stranger level with Ella Craven: there was a simplicity of frankness about her which plunged at once into the intimacies of things and which disarmed one by its very directness. No sooner were she and I left alone after tea, than she drew her arm-chair close up to the fire, put her feet on the fender, and, having slightly raised her skirts and remarked that her legs were frozen, turned her blue eyes full upon me and said: 'What do you think of the boys?'

I was so unprepared for the question that I had no answer ready; but Ella did not wait for an answer. 'Dreadful, aren't they?' she went on; 'especially Bertram. I think he has got plainer than ever. That beard!'

I cannot attempt to describe her face or her voice, or the funny little gesture with which she spread out her hands to the blaze; but there was something in them all that made me

laugh, and it was only with a little burst of laughter that I answered her.

My reply evidently astonished her, for her blue eyes grew quite round. 'Don't you really mind more than that?' she said.

Then I became grave. 'I mind very much sometimes, I'm afraid. I get vexed and irritated, but—I'm so sorry for them and for Godfrey; and then of course they won't be here long.'

'Oh, won't they?' The tone of her voice reminded me of Mr. Lillingworth's when I told him that Ellis had tastes.

'No; Godfrey is going to get them into offices—business of some kind.' Then, fearing to hear that incredulous note again, I hurried on to say that Ellis had only returned the previous day, but that his father thought him much improved, and that I felt sure that he, at any rate, would turn out well. 'Poor Bertram, of course, *is* rather—rather stupid,' I said; 'but if Ellis goes on improving, his companionship may help to develop Bertram too.'

'You are evidently of a hopeful disposition,' said my companion. 'But I am sure you are——' The eyes were turned on me again. 'One sees it in your face.'

'Do you think so—really?' I was thinking of what Sir Reginald Creagh had said.

Ella nodded. 'It's as plain as a pikestaff.' After an instant's contemplative pause: 'I like your face,' she went on. 'I did not expect to take to you, though I had heard you were remarkably pretty, but I do—at least I am sure I *shall*, because I like your face.'

I murmured that I was very glad.

'I hope you like mine,' she said, turning the visage in question full upon me.

It might have been an embarrassing question, but fortunately I was able to reply honestly that I did. 'Why did you expect not to like me?' I added.

She hesitated. 'I—I don't think I know you well enough yet to tell you.'

'I shan't mind—whatever it is,' I said eagerly, for I was on fire to know.

Ella reflected a moment, then shook her head. 'No,' she said, 'I think it's better to wait till to-morrow. And now I should like very much if I might go to my room. I don't possess a maid, and I do not care about strange servants fumbling about among my things.'

I took her upstairs and led her to her room. I was afraid she might find it cold in spite of the roaring fire which burned in the grate. 'I hope you don't mind an eastern exposure,' I said.

'I adore it,' she answered. 'The sun, if there is any, helps to wake you up in the morning, and then you get good sunrise effects.'

'Do you paint?' I asked.

'I am an artist,' she replied with dignity.

I went away much impressed; and light-hearted too, for it was very pleasant, somehow, to talk to a girl of my own age, and Ella's impulsive friendliness had quite done away with the shy feeling she had at first created in me. I went downstairs humming a waltz—one of the waltzes that used to stir my blood in the old days before I was married, the days when I went to balls and danced with young, frivolous men, no more sensible than myself. They seemed such a long way off, those days, though it was only last spring that . . . An unusual noise—though noise, to be sure, was always unusual in that orderly house—caused me to stay my steps and changed the current of my thoughts; a sound of scuffling and of voices raised in anger. It came from the floor I had just left; I listened; yes, from the direction of my stepsons' sitting-room. I turned, went up the stairs again, and along a passage to the room whence the sounds came. I opened the door without hesitation and went in. The noise was explained at once; the brothers were engaged in a hand-to-hand fight. Bertram was emitting wrathful, inarticulate sounds; Ellis was swearing violently.



the spring; and I told father the same thing, afraid of his catching cold, and that I thought it better for him to spend Christmas in London with the three sisters, Cordelia, Amy, and Cynthia, than to be troubled. But the truth was that I did not want to leave while my stepsons were at home: I had no clear view of the state of the case, and I feared that if I did not find it out for myself, he would be filled with regret, and reproach himself for having neglected me. Then, too, I feared his loving eyes; I could not think myself happy so long as I was not with him, but I feared, though with only a vague, instinctive fear, lest father's scrutiny should reveal my secret to him and to myself than I wished to acknowledge. Women have that feeling more than men, they are ready enough to play a part before careless observers. When love sits amongst the audience, it is hard to keep up the outward show. Not that I was conscious of my part, not that I thought myself unhappy, or at least out of place within my consciousness; I acted from a motive which I would not allow reflection to translate, but which now, looking back, I understand to be a fine one.

Bertram, who had advanced with bending knees, retreated, muttering that it was no good looking at things through glass.

'All collections are under glass,' said Ellis. 'If you'd ever been in a museum, you ninny, you would know that.'

I restored the table-cloth to the table, and placed the beetles and the butterflies upon it as I picked them up from the floor. There was only one butterfly seriously injured, and Ellis became so interested in rearranging his 'collection' that his ill-temper passed away; when by and by Bertram drew up to the table with a sheepish grin, he was allowed to take part in the process without rebuke. I left the two brothers on perfectly amicable terms, the fierceness gone out of their faces, and the stolidity established anew. As I went downstairs, I reflected that Ellis's 'tastes' had, so far, not led to any very desirable result. 'But no doubt they *will*,' I thought. 'It must be better and more developing to have interests than to care for nothing, and Godfrey said they quarrelled sometimes. I am sure they are really fond of each other.' Certainly Sir Reginald Creagh and Ella Craven were right; I was, no doubt, of a hopeful disposition; but in this case my hopes did not belie me. The brothers quarrelled from time to time, sometimes furiously and to the point of physical combat; but they invariably recovered after one had knocked the other down, and were as good friends as ever. It was Bertram who on these occasions generally succumbed and lay prone: he was bigger than Ellis, but much more clumsy, and it did not need much force or skill to upset him.

Looking into the library, I saw Godfrey seated calmly with his agent; he had evidently heard none of the noise which his sons had made, and I did not tell him of their quarrel. I was beginning to learn that it was better when things went wrong to keep them to myself and not to tell my husband. It took me some time to realise this fully, for father—— But Godfrey was not father, of course, and it was of no use to compare them. And Godfrey was very kind; I never forgot that; and indeed there were always things happening to keep

not eat so greedily as Bertram, and was altogether better mannered; but he had a way of abstracting the crystallised fruit from the dishes, when he thought nobody was looking, which was peculiarly his own, and which vexed me in spite of all the excuses I tried to make for him.

When dinner was at last over, when the boys had left us and Godfrey had retired to his library, I proposed to Ella that she and I should go for a walk. I had a longing for fresh air, and I could not help feeling a little sad; the thought of last Christmas day when father and I were so happy together would keep rushing into my head, drive it out as often as I might, and I felt that exercise would do me good. Ella agreed willingly, and we set out. She told me a good deal about herself as we walked. She had been left an orphan when she was sixteen, and Godfrey was her guardian. Not that there was very much to guard, she informed me, but still she had enough to live upon. She boarded with some relations of her mother's, who were not very well off, 'So as to give me,' she explained, 'the appearance of being properly chaperoned,' and worked at an artist's studio.

\* 'I don't think I have a great deal of talent,' she avowed, in her frank way, 'but a woman must have a career.'

'But *can* you have a career without a great deal of talent?' I asked.

She looked at me dubiously. 'I—I don't know. But at any rate it is something to fall back upon. If a woman does not marry, her life is so aimless, and people don't think so much whether she is young or old or married or single if she does something.'

'It depends upon how she does it,' I thought to myself; but aloud I said: 'But why should you not marry? I should think it was far more likely than not.'

'Oh, that is what everybody says; everybody expects me to marry, and it's so tiresome that sometimes I think I won't. Besides, it's so commonplace.'

'Should you mind being commonplace,' I asked, 'if you were happy?'

‘N—o ; but ordinary happiness is so dull. If I could have something out of the way, something rather—well, rather romantic in my life, you know——’ She looked at me doubtfully, as though testing my understanding and sympathy.

‘Oh yes ; something very sad, but which would come right in the end,’ I said eagerly, ‘or—or broke your heart.’ I felt a glow all through me ; we were evidently akin on such subjects, and we talked long and volubly ; great nonsense, no doubt, but oh, how I enjoyed it ! I can recall the thrill of it now. My banished girlish dreams took form again and surged up from my sentimental heart : in the possible tragedy and suffering of Ella’s future, I lived as it were in the atmosphere of my girlhood once more, and found deep solace in the picture of her romantic woes. Now and again, to be sure, I suffered a chill in my enthusiasm, for a strongly practical vein ran through her sentimental imaginings, and I could see that she would much prefer that her sorrows should end with love in a palace rather than in the ideal cottage of my girlish conceptions, or in the poetic pining away which vied with it in attractiveness. A title and a large income, I think, were her conception of romance, and it was no doubt a much less morbid one than my own. Still, in spite of the differences in our views, we got on admirably ; for these differences, belonging to the concrete side of the subject, did not come too prominently into view ; and we talked with effusion of self-sacrifice and love’s endurance, in the abstract, of a wounded heart behind a smiling face, of a proud and cold demeanour hiding a passionate grief. I am young again, as I think of the ideas and ideals of those days, and remember the thrill of regret that passed through me as I reflected that life, now that I was married, could bring me no opportunity for heroism. For my lot, as I regarded it then, had nothing heroic about it ; I should have felt myself merely wanting in gratitude had I not been cheerful when Godfrey was so almost constantly kind ; and ungenerous had I allowed my father to suspect that I found any cause for regret in the step I had taken.

## CHAPTER XI

'The daily dust that makes the mound  
The thoughts that flash and kindle int

ELLA CRAVEN stayed on into the new year glad of her company. I was always trying to get Godfrey or down to the boys, and it was with somebody on my own level. Before she made the remark she had made on the afternoon of the 15th, namely that she did not expect to like me, I was curious to know the reasons of her prejudice. As young creatures, I was very egotistical, and about myself, and the discussion even of it interested me.

'Well,' returned Ella, after a little persuasion, 'I want to know, it was because—as I heard you were young and very pretty—because I thought you had married Godfrey for his money.'

'But so I did,' said I.

'You *did*?' I shall never forget the expression on her face, nor the enormous extent to which she was surprised. 'Well, I never should—with your ideas.' Then I saw the meaning she had attached to the word.

'Oh no,' I protested. '*That's* not heroism. Besides, there did not seem to me to be any choice.'

'I call it heroism,' Ella maintained. '*I* couldn't have married Godfrey, especially with the boys and all, if every relation I had was in the workhouse.'

'But I didn't——' I began, and then remembered that it would not do to say I had not known about the boys, as it might give her the false impression that Godfrey had wilfully deceived me. 'The boys were in the background,' I said.

'A funny background,' she retorted. 'They're painfully, horribly, in the foreground now, at any rate. Don't you regret it?' she added abruptly.

'No,' I answered. I thought of father as I spoke, and my denial was the absolute truth.

She looked at me again, then got up, came to me, and kissed me. 'I think you are rather a fine character,' she said sententiously but with much kindness.

I was astonished, but decidedly pleased, for who does not like the idea of being a fine character? A glow of satisfaction remained with me till the next morning, when I realised that it was Ella's affection and not any splendour in myself which had elevated me to the position of a heroine, and so descended from my pedestal. It was not till that morning that I discovered that Ella knew Mr. Lillingworth.

'He comes to my aunt's house sometimes,' she informed me, 'and I meet him about. He's very clever.'

'Is he?' I asked, feeling somewhat ashamed of myself for not having found it out.

'Yes; he has a future.'

'Indeed?' I said, still more impressed. 'Of what kind—I mean, what does he do?'

'He hasn't done anything so far, except see the world; but he's going to follow in his father's footsteps, I believe.'

'Something very learned?' I inquired tentatively, feeling I ought to have known.

'No, distilling; but he will probably go into politics as

lay the generosity. Presently a wistful look came into her blue eyes. 'I believe you are really clever,' he said. 'He told me you were highly intelligent!' I cried. 'You make me feel like a performing dog.'

was offended, and remarked stiffly that of course her care to be appreciated, she apologised for Mr. Lillingworth's opinion of me; whereupon I said so humbly that I was sorry, and forgave me, and we talked about Mr. Lillingworth a quarter of an hour. We were interrupted by the entrance of Bertram.

'We are going to swim the dogs,' he said. 'I

gladly' and looked at Ella, knowing she did not like the companionship of the boys.

'Beauty'—Beauty was the spaniel—'Beauty swims like a dog,' said Bertram, and the pleading look in her eyes, indeed, than a man's, I thought of me; Ella must bear with her cousins' company an hour or so.

'It will come, of course,' I answered. 'Thank you.'

grace, and she and I rushed up the broad staircase two steps at a time. When, together, we went out into the yard, we found all the dogs loose, gambolling and barking in a state of wild excitement, while Ellis in their midst slashed here and there with a dog whip: Bertram was anxiously watching for our arrival.

'Come along!' I cried. 'I don't care how fast we go, for I am frightfully cold. I'll run if you like.'

'Will you race?' asked Bertram.

'Oh yes, if you like—as far as that first gate. Ella, you must start us.'

'I'll run too,' said Ellis.

I stood in the middle, the great overgrown Bertram on one side, and the ponderous Ellis on the other. Suddenly the thought came to me that I was a mother playing with her two sons, and it was a thought at the same time so absurd and so tragic, that I hardly knew whether to laugh or to cry. 'Oh dear! if they were only two dear, sweet little boys of my own!' I cried out in my mind; and then Ella said:

'One, two, three and away,' and off we went.

The dogs barked furiously, and crossed so often in front of us in their circling progress, that I thought more than once I should be upset. I was a good runner, but the cold air quickly took my breath, thus curbing my speed, and the race was soon merely between the two brothers. Bertram's long legs gave him a temporary advantage, but he was clumsy, and tripped and stumbled more than once, and Ellis was first at the gate by a couple of yards.

'I've won,' he shouted, in a voice of triumph. 'I've beaten you both.'

'It was the dogs,' said Bertram. 'Scamp kept on running right in front of me, and as for that Beauty——'

'All very fine to put it on the dogs,' broke in Ellis. 'It's because I'm the best runner; I'd beat you any day.'

'No, you wouldn't.'

'Yes, I would.'

There were signs of a quarrel brewing, and I hastened to



l. 'I wonder what their own mother th

she liked them, I suppose—in fact I know  
were quite young when she died. For r  
bear it—to have sons like that.'

could I,' I said, and stopped abruptly. 'Wh  
ht, and put the thought away from me.

I am sure I shall never have any children,' I  
on,' I said aloud ; 'we had better not lag be

we reached the pond, the bathing had  
the dogs were dashing into the water af  
ies, and rushing out again, throwing off sho  
ats as they shook themselves on the ban  
were in high glee ; Bertram splashed all

with excitement ; Ellis taking a sly pl

induce us to come within reach of a wetti  
y scorn kept at a distance, but I, forgetful

est in the proceedings to get the better of m

ie in for a considerable sprinkling from th

erging Beauty ; whereupon Ellis gave ve

ined guffaw, and Bertram, producing the u

e pocket-handkerchief, accentuated my m

the dirty water firmly into my skirt in w

upon my memory. I drove with her to the station, and we made no end of promises to write often as we stood together on the platform, and waved hands and handkerchiefs as the train steamed away. I can recall vividly the look of the road as I drove homewards; gloomy it looked in its wintry colourlessness, and very lonely it seemed to me; and I remember that all the way, the thought I had driven from me the day before persisted in coming back, and that I struggled with it, half in fear, half with a dim, vague yearning which I did not understand. But in any case, I continued to assure myself, I should never have any children; I could not imagine myself with a child, I said. And then into my thought those words of the fortune-teller's thrust themselves and mingled with it: 'There will be a blossom of your body, and later a bloom of your heart.' What did they mean?

## CHAPTER XII

'Yea, Death's is a face that is fell to see ;  
But bitterer pangs Life hoards for thee.'

It was February, that saddest of months, when the despair of winter meets the wistfulness of spring ; it was February, when the uneasy foreboding which had troubled me so long sprang suddenly into a shape of definite ill, when the third prophecy of the fortune-teller passed into fulfilment, when the first great sorrow of my life descended upon me. Long ago, yet ever present, for nothing really passes, and a thousand years and one day are the same in the courts of love and pain ; long ago, yet clear and distinct in my memory, is that February morning : a gray sky, but with a light in it ; thin clouds that drifted slowly ; hardly a breeze, but a movement of the air ; over the fields and stirring in the trees a sense as of awakening consciousness ; such was the day.

Telegrams were rarer then than now, and were employed, as a rule, only in matters of importance, and I think, when Burge came into my boudoir with that yellow envelope on the silver salver, that he brought me the first telegram I had ever directly received. Surprise was my first feeling, and an almost pleasurable quickening of the pulse ; in my monotonous life such an interruption was a great event. But even as I tore open the envelope, my heart sank, and when I read the words within, it seemed to me that I had always known this hour would come, when I should stand in just this room, with a half-written letter on my writing-table, and a bunch of violets in a green vase beside it ; Burge facing me, respectful and curious, the February sky looking in at the window, and

in the grate a wood fire that spluttered and blazed ; and it seemed to me that I knew by heart the message in my hand. *Father dangerously ill. Come at once.* So it ran, in the usual laconic form. I read it, and then, for all my clearness of memory, what happened next is a blank. I have a dim impression that Burge became a little less a butler, a little more a man, and I have an idea that he said something ; but I cannot be sure, and I do not know whether I answered him. The next thing I remember is standing in Godfrey's study and saying : ' I must go at once. And Crosbie takes so long putting the horses in ; I will walk to the station.' The station was five miles away, and my proposition was ridiculous, but at that moment, the moment of my first acquaintance with real trouble, I was conscious of but one desire ; I longed only to start, to do something, anything, to set me on my way. Godfrey pointed out to me that it was only eleven o'clock, and there was no train till half-past twelve, and then, when I took in the meaning of his words, a sort of despair seized upon me. Everybody knows the feeling, everybody who has received a summons such as that which called me now ; the impotent longing to transcend the forces of time and space ; the enforced submission ; the horrible waiting when the will is on fire and the heart a trembling anxiety. And then the halting journey ; the train that first will not come, and then stops, and stops, and stops again ; the crowd of people at the station that block one's hurrying way ; the slow cab that will not hasten, but lingers behind this vehicle and that, pausing at street corners and pulled up by policemen. Everybody knows these things and the suffering of them, and the nightmare sense of unreality and the certitude of dread.

There was a sort of awful hush in the little house, but as I entered the hall—the hall father and I had so often crossed, gay, happy, and together—Cynthia, my youngest sister, came running down the stairs.

'Is—is——' I faltered, but she knew what I wanted to ask.

'He is alive,' she answered.

She drew me into the room we called his study, and there were his pipes, and his books and papers, and the gloves that he always would leave lying about. I gave a great sort of dry sob as my eyes fell upon the gloves, and turning: 'Let me go to him,' I said.

'Cordelia is with him,' Cynthia answered. 'I will tell her.'

'I will come with you—I can't wait,' I began, and just then Cordelia came in. She was trim and neat and dignified as usual.

'Amy was in the dressing-room and heard your cab drive up,' she said, and came forward and shook my hand and kissed me, just, I thought, as if I had come to pay an ordinary call.

'How is he?' I gasped. 'What does the doctor say? Is there——' I could not finish the question; I somehow could not ask Cordelia if there were any hope; perhaps because I knew so well there was none.

'He is about the same. You will like to see him, of course; but pray, Annie, control yourself; the one thing that you must not do is to agitate him.'

'No,' I said meekly, 'no, I won't; but please, Cordelia, let me go at once!'

The calm eyes surveyed me. 'Hadh't you better put your hat straight?' said Cordelia.

I became conscious then that my hat was on one side and that a lock of hair was loose about my neck. I took off the hat altogether; impatiently, for what did it matter, I felt, whether one's hat were straight or crooked, inside out or upside down, when father was dying? and with Cordelia's eyes upon me, I fastened up the stray lock of hair; then:

'Please,' I said, 'please let us go at once!'

If she had kept me waiting any longer, I believe I should have hit her, but she turned and left the room, and I followed her up the stairs.

How slowly she went! Had I been alone I should have run, and when we reached the upper floor she took me into

the dressing-room and cautioned me again to control myself. Amy was there in the dressing-room, brusque and undemonstrative, but with eyes that had been crying, and those eyes drew me towards her. Cordelia told me then that father had had a stroke, and she was about to recount some of the details of his illness when I interrupted her.

'I can hear afterwards. I want to see him now.'

'Very well; just as you like.'

She was somewhat affronted, but what did it matter—then? She put her hand upon the door handle.

'No,' I said, 'you have had him all these hours. I will go in alone.'

'The nurse is there,' she said, but drew back. A nurse seemed to me nobody; her presence did not count; but I felt that I did not want Cordelia with me when I said good-bye to father—I knew it was good-bye.

He was lying quite still in the bed, his face a little, only a little twisted, his eyes closed. I had never seen anybody very ill, and the strangeness of it awed me; for a moment I did not know what to do. Then I went close to him.

'Father!' It seemed to me that the eyelids twitched, but they did not unclose. 'Father, it's I, Annie. Do you know me? Dearest, do you know me?'

With a great, great effort the spirit prevailed against the stricken flesh; slowly the eyelids were raised; only half-way, but I saw the eyes, the blue eyes that I knew, and though dim, there was light in them still, the light of love. I bent over him and kissed him as I spoke. I do not know what words I said, but I poured out my heart that had been swelling all through those hours of waiting and suspense, and was bursting with grief and longing. It seemed to me that his lips moved, and I put my ear close, close to them. At first I caught no meaning in the faint, whispering sound; then I heard words, half formed only, but I heard them: 'happy . . . Godfrey.' Just those two, but I knew what he meant.

'Yes, dear, yes,' I answered, 'I am quite, quite happy with Godfrey. You need have no anxiety, no fear. It was the

best thing that could have happened to me, to be married, for I should have been so lonely all alone.'

I could not say that he smiled, yet a sort of light, of great peace and content, spread itself over his face. Only for a moment; then the spirit, overweighted, sank back again, and all was blank as when I had first entered the room.

The nurse came forward and spoke. 'It is the first return of consciousness, and——'

'And?' I questioned.

'He will not be conscious again.'

I stayed there all that day, in the house and in his room. I would not leave him. I did not heed the commands of Cordelia or the entreaties of Amy and Cynthia to take rest or to go downstairs for food. More than once they brought me, Cynthia or Amy, soup or tea, and I ate and drank for the sake of peace; but I would not leave the room. I stayed there all that day and all the night. He died at the dawn.

After that I do not remember distinctly. I know I was in a room by myself lying on a bed; and later on I was in the dining-room with my three sisters, and Cordelia was telling me I must order my mourning, and consulting with Amy as to what width of crêpe we ought to wear. The room looked horribly gloomy with the blinds down, and there was a sort of roast muttony smell in it. I have always connected the two things—crêpe and roast mutton—ever since, and cannot bear either of them.

'Anna must stay with one of us till after the funeral,' said Cordelia. She had three names for me: Annabel for state occasions; Anna when she was not pleased with me; Annie when I had her full approval. I knew, consequently, that I had in some way run counter to her wishes or her code of conduct; but though habitually I stood in awe of Cordelia, I did not care now. There was only one thing I cared about, that father was dead (they said so, at least, and in some odd way I knew it was true, though in another I did not believe it), and that upstairs there was lying on his bed something that was not he.

'I can stay here,' I said, in answer to Cordelia's remark.

'No, indeed. People would think it very odd if we left you here alone. And it would not be good for you ; you are far too morbid and unnatural as it is. Besides, there is not room.'

'There is the room upstairs,' I ventured, for indeed I longed to be left alone.

'It is very small, and there is only a single bed in it, and Godfrey of course must come up for the funeral. Indeed, I think he had better come at once and look after you.'

'She had better come to me,' said Cynthia.

'Very well, I will go to Cynthia,' I assented, for fear lest in the end I should be obliged to go and stay with Cordelia. Cynthia was nearer my own age and had not so much common-sense as Cordelia, and I knew she would not mind if I locked my door on the inside and did not come down to lunch. It was thus decided ; but that afternoon we all had to go to Cordelia's to meet a dressmaker from one of the large mourning shops, for it would not do, Cordelia decreed, for us to go about shopping in public places. She ordered everything for me, even down to my gloves, and I remember that even in the dazed misery of my grief, I could not help admiring her dramatic instinct, so perfectly adjusted was her manner to the width of the crêpe that was to border our skirts. The dressmaker played up to her with trained appreciation, and towards the end of the interview it seemed to me so funny that I began to laugh, and they all looked so shocked that I laughed still more, and then I cried, and finally went into hysterics ; and Cordelia, after trying both coaxing and reproof in vain, sent for James, who gave me a glass of sherry, and sent me home with Cynthia in a cab.

Cynthia was very kind to me those next few days, and so was Norman, her husband. I had my breakfast in bed, and they did not mind if I locked my door and stayed upstairs, and Norman gave me champagne every night for dinner. I did not care whether I drank wine or water, but I knew that Norman prided himself on his champagne and must be fully



conscious that a fine brand was wasted on me, and I was very grateful to him for his desire to do me good.

Godfrey arrived the day before the funeral.

'You will be so pleased to have him with you, you poor little thing,' said Cynthia on the morning of that day.

'Yes, very,' I replied, and was horrified to find that at the bottom of my heart I was not pleased at all; I did not confess it in so many words to myself, but I knew that I would rather have been alone. Godfrey was very kind—it was curious how often I told myself that—but he had little fidgety ways; he was not so indulgent either as he had been when we were first married, and was getting into a habit of expecting more and more attention to himself, his likes and dislikes. But he was very kind, there was no doubt of it, that day when he arrived, and said he knew what a loss father would be to me, and that he would do his best to take his place. I kissed the cheek he held close to my mouth, and tried to think it was a support and comfort to feel his arm round my waist; and at night I waited till I heard his breathing come regularly, and then stole out of bed and groped my way into his dressing-room, and cried away some of the tears I had been keeping back all day—for I could not lock my door, of course, any more. There was a fire in the dressing-room, for Cynthia knew that Godfrey had a tendency to rheumatism, and when I was tired with crying, I crouched down before it, and must have fallen asleep. I slept some time too, for when I came to myself the fire was out and there was a dim gray light in the room, and I was very cold. I was afraid that Godfrey would awake and miss me and be angry, and tell me I was morbid and absurd, which was what everybody always had told me when I was very unhappy—everybody except father; and I crept back as gently and quickly as I could to bed. Godfrey was still fast asleep; he was a very good sleeper at that time, except when he had drunk port, and Norman fortunately had given him claret.

### CHAPTER XIII

'Her tears had flooded her heart again ;  
As after a long day's bitter rain.'

I NEED not and cannot write about the funeral. It was the first one I had ever been to, and it all seemed to me like a horrid dream. Modern ideas have taken from the interment of the body some of the unchristian adjuncts which used to be considered a necessary part of the process ; but in those days the hearse and the horses were rendered more hideously and insistently black by great nodding plumes, while yards of floating crêpe, attached to the hats of the attendants, deepened the impression of ugliness and gloom. Thus in my memory those hours of the funeral are clothed about with physical as well as mental blackness, though the day I believe was sunny ; with that pale February sunshine which has in it the wistfulness of hope and the melancholy of despair.

It was over at last, the service, the standing by the grave, the drive back at quickened speed ; it was over, but the sense of it is with me still. I know that the burial-service is beautiful, that it speaks of a life triumphant over death, in language wonderful and strong ; yet to me, from association, it is terrible. That tolling bell, more pitiless with its intervals of dumb restraint than if it persisted continuously, and those words breaking in upon the knell-divided silence : *I am the resurrection and the life* ; are they not entwined in the ears of my heart with unspeakable agonies of sorrow, as time after time I have followed some dear one to the grave ? Now it is different ; the larger hope, the sure conviction, have taken the bitterness from life, the finality from death, the rebellion from

positive, and that something was the reality. No, he was not there in the grave. It is that sense, I think, strong in me ever since the moment when I saw father lying dead, strong with the strength of instinct, and apart from knowledge, reason, or belief; it is that sense, that the individuality passes out of the body at death, leaving the flesh verily but a vacant shell; it is the force of that sense, I am sure, which has prevented my ever desiring to visit the graves of those I loved, ever finding any comfort or relief in such visits. I know that to many, the neighbourhood of a grave seems to bring the dead, too, nearer, but to me it never was so, from the very first. In twilight, when all is still, or in the speaking silence of some far-off solitary place, where only Nature's voices thrill the air; when the longing spirit, free from the influence of the currents of human thought and emotion that flow about the haunts of men, is a little less earth-entangled, a little more in tune with the finer vibrations, I can imagine or believe that the veil between this world of matter and the next may become somewhat less dense, impenetrable, rigid, and that a communion of some sort, impassable, vague, but actual, may be established between the living and the dead. But that the decaying dust maintains a link with the departed spirit, I have never been able to feel, and the graveyard brings me no nearer to the presence that is gone. To keep the spot where dust goes back to dust in orderly condition is love's necessity; yet I have sometimes wondered if the neglected condition of burial-places often observable in Roman Catholic countries, may not in part be due to a less materialistic conception of the mystery of death, preserved in the older, more mystic form of the Christian faith, than that which is implied in the Protestant attitude.

But these thoughts, written down now, had no definite place in my mind as I sat that night by the window. I only felt that father was gone from me, that I wanted and could not find him. Looking up into the still sky, which, clear and star-studded, seemed so much vaster than when clouds hid its depths, sensing my ignorance and impotence, my small-

ness and the futility of desire, I became overwhelmed by the giant of space. The regions of it, the immeasurable trackless regions! If it was thither he had gone; if it was in one of those countless spots of light his soul found habitation, or if it moved continuously upon the roadless way, it were hopeless ever to know, hopeless too, surely, to rejoin or to follow it. A great desolation fell upon me, a sense of utter loneliness. He had been the centre of my world, the foundation in which life seemed to rest, the positive point, to which all else I thought, conceived, and did was related; without him existence lost its balance, its proportion, its reality. And he was gone; I could not find him; in the mazes of the universe he was lost to me: and in this, the first great shock to my dream of what seemed to me existence, I was one of the

‘Children crying in the night,  
And with no language but a cry.’

The cry was wholly inarticulate; questioning had hardly begun; rebellion was indefinite; there was developed in me as yet no conscious criticism of the scheme of things. I sat by the window and suffered loneliness and longing; that was all.

I was recalled to the immediate present by the noise of wheels which stopped beneath my window; it was the carriage back from Bryanston Square, and at once I hurried out of my dressing-gown and into bed. I was too restlessly wide awake to pretend sleep; I could not have lain still long enough to carry out the deception successfully; so when Godfrey entered the room, I faced him with wide open eyes.

‘Not asleep, Annie?’

‘No, not yet.’

‘Haven’t you slept at all?’ This with commiseration tinged with something like reproach.

‘No,’ shamefacedly, and with a twinge of conscience as I thought of the chair by the window—‘I didn’t feel inclined to.’

Godfrey, with a touch of anxiety: ‘You don’t feel sick still?’

I, with alacrity: ‘Oh no, not at all’; for Godfrey had a

patent lozenge which he relied upon in cases of sickness, which he had before administered to me, and which I found particularly loathsome.

'You are smiling,' he said. 'Glad to have me back to take care of you?'

'Yes,' said I, and put up my mouth to be kissed in an effort to make my insincerity sincere. I could not tell Godfrey that my smile was caused by the incongruity of the character of his solicitude with the needs of my mood. From the regions of space to a patent lozenge! Even in my unhappiness the drollness of it struck me. But I was too genuinely miserable to be amused for more than a passing moment, and laying my head again upon the pillow, I closed my eyes and said that I thought I could now go to sleep.

## CHAPTER XIV

'Let the night be ne'er so dark,  
The moon is surely somewhere in the sky.'

I WAS glad to be back at Camp Holt. There was a homelike feeling about my boudoir and my bedroom, even about the inappropriately carpeted hall and the *chambre parvenue*, as in my own mind I designated the drawing-room, so over-resplendent were its decoration and furniture; there was a homelike feeling all the house through when we arrived from London on that chilly afternoon. The blazing fires were full of comfort too; and the boys and the dogs, who were all collected together outside the front door in a whip-slashing, barking mass, seemed pleased to see us again. I was—I felt, at any rate—very gentle towards the boys all that day, and very dutiful and tender towards Godfrey. I had been thinking in the train that had I not been married, I should have been alone and homeless now, and very poor, obliged perhaps to live with one of my sisters, and semi-dependent upon the generosity of one of my brothers-in-law. I passed them mentally in review. There was James Brand, Member of Parliament and Poor Law Guardian, with an income derived from house property in Manchester, and an only son to follow in his footsteps. He was kindly, as I have said, and not ungenerous, and I knew he would not have grudged me my keep; but he was one of those people who somehow cause the recipients of their benefits to be perpetually conscious that they are benefitted, and I felt that I could not have been beholden to him. Besides, he read the newspaper at breakfast, a thing I never could stand in a man at any

time. Godfrey did it too, but that did not reconcile me to the practice ; and when many years later I saw *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* at the St. James's Theatre, my sympathies were with the heroine from the moment when Aubr y Tanqueray opened out the printed sheet, and divided his attention between it and his breakfast. But the newspaper of course was a drawback which I brought forward only in mock seriousness, partly in a dreary little effort to amuse myself, partly in a vain attempt to avoid the acknowledgment of a feeling which seemed to me disloyal. There was a bar to the thought of Bryanston Square as a home far more solid than the morning combination of James and the *Times*. There was Cordelia behind the urn. I used to think it characteristic of Cordelia that she used an urn ; it was more in keeping with her somehow than a kettle, and it gave to her utterances in some way the impressiveness attaching to the elevation of a platform ; awed as I always was by her dignity and common-sense, she and the urn together would have caused me to begin each day in a condition of humility bordering on depression. I stated the fact with vague flippancy to myself, because of a certain disloyalty which seemed to me to inhere in a franker recognition of it ; nevertheless it was a weighty reality. I had an affection for Cordelia, I admired and respected her ; but ours were alien natures ; my ideas conflicted with her convictions, my mental constitution with her theories. To be sure I had married in accordance with her views ; but that, she said, was by chance, and that it would have been far more characteristic of me had I married a penniless curate or a struggling artist. I knew this to be true, though I had never breathed to her, or indeed to anybody, my early dream of a hero tall and splendid, with the poet's brow and destiny. Romance had no place in Cordelia's universe ; according to her, it was a delusion born of the devil Fantasy to deceive and beguile the young ; a sincere affection, she said, was the only substantial factor in conjugal happiness, and love but a shadow. I, on the contrary, was always dreaming of, striving after,

something higher than the levels of life as I knew it, wider than its accepted limits ; and while I felt that many of those with whom I came in contact were negatively opposed to my ideas, Cordelia's opposition was positive, and strong with the strength of a decided character. Undeveloped as I was at that time, uncertain of my opinions, though confident in my intuitions, I knew instinctively that to live with her would mean a perpetual struggle for the maintenance of my individuality ; and I knew too that such a struggle would be bad for both of us.

Then there were the Fothergills. Amy's husband, baronet, justice of the peace, and country gentleman, was easy-going and easy-spending, and Amy herself was much less alarming than Cordelia ; but Alfred's free hand caused money to be often short in the Fothergill household, according to Amy at least, who was constantly complaining of expenses and the difficulty of meeting them ; and I felt that had I lived at Caxley Manor I should have been continually conscious that I was adding to her difficulties.

There remained the Carews. Norman, as I have said, gave me champagne, knowing that I was incapable of appreciating the excellence of the brand, and the act was characteristic of him ; discreet and duly careful in the everyday conduct of affairs, he could be wholly generous on occasion. A partner in the great banking firm of Carew, Carson & Mowbray, prosperous and shrewd, liberal but not extravagant, he was the ideally moderate man. He would have given me a home, and been quite kind to me, and, were I overtaken by sickness or sorrow, would have administered ungrudgingly champagne, change of air, or a new frock, as he considered best suited to the situation. Yet I should never have felt at home with him ; he was a man to whom women were amongst the adjuncts, not the interests, of life ; they belonged to his scheme of existence, but were not necessary to his happiness ; and while he treated them with consideration, his attitude towards them was negatively, and unconsciously to himself, one of condescension. With such men, I have never been



able, as the saying is, to get on ; I was not quite myself in Norman's presence, but always to a certain extent what he supposed me to be. In some measure he and Cordelia had the same effect upon me, but with a difference, for while the one was always prepared to combat my ideas, the other did not expect me to have any ideas to combat. According to Norman, all properly brought up women thought on the same lines, held the same beliefs, appreciated the same enjoyments, hoped for the same happiness. Did any woman by her conversation interfere with his comfortable conceptions, he thought she had been reading too many novels, English if the ideas she put forward seemed to him foolish, French if he considered them dangerous. Did any depart from the beaten path marked out for them, he consigned them to one of two categories, the abnormal and the innately bad. To Norman Carew each fellow-man was a separate specimen of a common genus, each woman but a repeated example of a single species. Cynthia fortunately transcended none of his limits, and was unaffected by his limitations. She needed no companionship beyond that of the bodily presence, no interchange of thought beyond comments upon outward events or the discussion of necessary arrangements, no bond closer than that of mutual or common interests. He gave her a liberal allowance and a free hand in household matters ; he was even-tempered and did not interfere too much in her disposal of her time ; according to both of them she had all that a woman could or should desire. But I was not Cynthia, and even at that time, raw and undeveloped, I could not comfortably have settled down in the groove in which Norman would have expected me to amble contentedly along. My present position, to be sure, was not an ideal one ; but I had given up ideals, romance, all that to my girlish vision constituted the essence and poetry of life, that evening in the garden when I had made up my mind to marry Godfrey. I had given them up as practical possibilities for myself, but I held them still as living articles of faith ; and though I would as soon have thought of flying over the

moon as of discussing my ideas with my husband, I was at least at liberty to hold them unmolested. My inward life at Camp Holt, if unshared, was also untrammelled; if I could not be wholly myself as in the happy lost days I had spent with father, I had not, at any rate, to attempt to be somebody else. Could I have earned my own living? my reflections went on to the rumbling accompaniment made by the untiring train. Hardly, for my education had not fitted me to teach others, and in those days there was little open to a woman but teaching. And besides, there would always have been the opposing factor of Cordelia. Cordelia would have considered the earning of my living a reflection upon the family respectability and generosity, and was fully capable of following me to any and every situation I succeeded in obtaining, of representing to my employers that my conduct was wilful and unnecessary, and of carrying me off in triumph.

No, I was in better case, freer and more independent, as I was; those last words I had spoken to father were not altogether false. I was at least beholden to nobody, and this was a great consolation. Godfrey, to be sure, was a benefactor, and as such I owed him affection and gratitude; but Godfrey had made a deliberate bargain; he had wanted me; I had not been thrust upon him. And besides, I did not now feel quite so overwhelmed by the load of benefits conferred as I had done at first, for as time went on, the sort of spoilt child treatment he had accorded me in the early married days was superseded by one which laid stress on the duties rather than the privileges of a wife; and his little exacting ways, while they sometimes jarred upon me, yet gave me a sort of satisfaction, seeming to take from the heavy measure in the scale of 'receive' and add something to that of 'give.' So I was content with my lot on this first evening of my return to Camp Holt, and felt, as I have said, especially tender towards Godfrey, especially friendly towards my stepsons, especially anxious to please and to be pleased. And the evening would not last long, I told myself; it would

how I arrived at a successful result. But I had to do something to prevent their banishment, and patience was all I could think of.

'As you like,' Godfrey answered, 'only I will not have you bothered. Do you hear? If you annoy Annie in any way I will not have you in the drawing-room.'

Neither of his sons answered him; they rarely did when he found fault with them, for, except when they were in one of their fits of rage, they were as easily cowed as children, Bertram especially; Ellis had a fund of obstinacy which produced in him at times a rigid though silent resistance. His brow was like thunder now, and I believe had Godfrey insisted upon his leaving the room at that moment, he would have fought against obedience to the death. I tried to divert his anger by asking him to bring forward the card-table, and soon calm reigned in the wake of the storm; Godfrey once more slept in his arm-chair, and his sons, leaning on the card-table with arms too apt to encroach upon the space belonging to the cards, eagerly followed my efforts to bring *Napoleon* to a successful issue.

The great advantage of patience is that it keeps the attention fixed perforce; you cannot play with a wandering mind, so that I was obliged to give myself wholly to the game. But how glad I was when it was half-past ten and Burge came in carrying the tray with water, whisky, and a bottle of soda-water! Then Godfrey rose from his arm-chair, took the *Times* from the floor whither it had glided, gave vent to the little fiction with which he was wont to cover the fact of his slumbers, by remarking that the foreign correspondence was very interesting and that I ought to read the leading article, and proceeded to pour his usual amount of whisky into a tumbler. The tumbler, filled up with soda-water, he carried off to the library, where he consumed the contents slowly to the accompaniment of a cigar, while I, having drunk a glass of water, and said good-night to my stepsons, was free at last to go upstairs to my room.

Something of despair seized upon me as I stood by the

window and looked out on the moonlit park. Would it be always like this, my life? Day after day the same, with just such evenings, stretching out into monotonous years. So many years; for the horizon of death looks very far away to the young when there are no undulations of events, no hills of expectation to break the stretch of the sky. And father was dead! Always till now, whether I had been with him or not, I had had the sense that he was there, a part of life, belonging to my world, a centre, a refuge, an aim. Now he was gone. I did not realise it yet, for actual realisation takes a long time, and means in its practical working the adjustment of the whole being to new conditions; but it was in my consciousness, and coloured—or darkened were the better word—all that I saw ahead. After a while I kneeled down and said my prayers, the set, formal prayers I knew by rote; then, looking forth once more into the moonlight, something within me cried out with a great cry; something—I knew not what; and it called to—I knew not whom. Only there came back to me that which to my daily prayers never had been vouchsafed, that which, since the childish days when I had prayed to a God like an enormous man for childish joys never granted, I had unconsciously ceased to expect; there came back an answer. No positive reply, no tangible benefit; inarticulate as was the call, so also was the answer; a sense that I was not quite alone, a solitary unit in the wide sphere of existence, but belonged to some vast force without me as within, eternal, universal, and supreme. Imagination it will seem to some, and necessarily; for to them such possibilities have come no nearer than imagination's realm. But I know that deep had called to deep, and that through the silent realm of human loneliness there could not fail to stir the sound of a reply.

## CHAPTER XV

*'For that which doth affright the most is oft  
But shadow, which a fearful spirit throws  
On substance innocent of hurt or harm.'*

I HAVE said that when, on the evening of my home-coming, I looked upon the landscape of my future, I saw no rising ground of events, no hills of expectation to break the level of the plain. That was true of the moment, but only of the moment; except in such crises of depression, the view ahead appeared not wholly destitute of heights. I was too young to have done with dreams of the indefinitely possible, the sweet, vague visions that hope holds out to youth; and the peaks of unrealised romance still towered in a mist of beauty above the facts of actual life. As it turned out, there was some ground for my feeling that placidity would not be the keynote of my existence; for my life has not been a level life; ups and downs have chequered its course, and both comedies and tragedies have been played on the way. 'The years will be calm, but you will suffer; there will be few events, but many experiences.' So she had said, that woman with the tousled hair and the strange, pale eyes, and her words proved true. 'Character is destiny,' it has been said, and the truth of the saying is patent, for the same outward circumstances will lead, with people of varying character, to varying results; it may be therefore that it was a shrewd perception of what I was, rather than of what definitely was to happen to me, that evoked the fortune-teller's prophecy. But at first, after father's death, the outlook was hopelessly flat. I missed him

more than I can ever say. To be sure, those months of marriage, during which I had been weaned from his companionship, had done something to break the shock of the loss ; there was not that wrenching away of the very fibres of existence which takes place when part of the daily life dies with the love that filled it ; not the hourly consciousness of broken communion which cries continually, 'I do now alone what we did together' ; not the chill pain of disappointed habit, broken, but half expectant still. But there was the inexpressible blank of a centre gone from the keenest part of life, the life of the heart ; in my thoughts and hopes and aims he had lived, the root and flower of my dearest happiness ; and being gone, it seemed to me that the world was void, and I myself, purposeless and alone. So the spring was very desolate to me, and the voice of spring, wistful but joyous, calling, as it always does, to keener life, to some impalpable, unrealised hope, smote me with a sharp sense of contrast ; at first I would not be comforted. But youth was strong within me—the god that may die with time, but is rarely slain by circumstance—and the sweep of his magic wand made first a rainbow across my heavy sky, then, rifted the clouds apart, let the sun pierce through and shine upon me. I clung indeed to my sorrow, not knowing, as I later learned, that sorrow needs no bidding to abide, but holds in grim faithfulness to the heart she once possesses ; yet, in spite of myself, my heart lightened, and the gayer notes of the song of life awoke answering vibrations within. And then, beautifying the returning joyousness of youth, there formed itself upon my horizon in dim and misty form the promise of a definite event, an actual interest. At first I glanced at it with eyes half startled, half incredulous ; but as I looked and looked again, the cloud-like shadow became substance, positive and defined, and the empty future was peopled with a thousand hopes. For a time the hopes were cloudless ; the thought that had come to me that day when Ella Craven and I had gone with the boys to see the dogs swim did not at first intrude upon them ; I dreamed only of the joy that should make the solitary wilderness of Camp Holt to blossom

like the rose. But by and by, and quite suddenly, the uneasiness that I had banished came back to me. I remember its coming so well, and the shock of it. I had awaked early, at dawn, and the twittering of birds was loud in my half-heeding ears as the thought, the second thought of my awaking out of sleep, rose like a sun into my consciousness: the first, after that dim sense of trouble with which the struggling mind receives each day anew the certainty of sorrow, was always still that father was dead. The sun had followed the blankness of loss and was shining into my heart; in my mental vision was a tiny form, rounded and soft, weak and helpless enough to rouse all the protective instinct of a mother's heart; and in my half-conscious ears the twittering of birds. And then, all at once, the thought of that January day came back and smote me. I saw the park and my stepsons, rough and angry; I heard Ella's voice and saw her face as she spoke her contemptuous comment; and 'They can't help it, you know; they were born like that,' said I. 'They were born like that,' I said in the picture, and the picture went on unrolling itself; the brothers were on ahead now and Ella was speaking again: 'For my part I couldn't bear to have sons like that,' she said. I answered her; a careless 'Nor could I,' and stopped suddenly, pulled up by a thought I would not utter.

I had stifled the thought then by saying to myself that the possibility shadowed in the idea I would not form was one that could not arise, that I should never be the mother of children, that Bertram and Ellis would remain the only sons of their house. But now it was all changed, and the thought was alive again, strong and sharp and hideous. They were born like that, it said, these two elder children. Why should a third be different? I was wide awake now; that sunshine in my heart was changed to a burning terror.

'If,' I said, 'if—if—if——?'

My mind was full of pictures; I would not make the outlines of them definite; but the shadowy dread hardened into substance.

I carried the dread about with me for three days, and during those days I suffered miserably. I looked at Bertram and Ellis with critical shrinking. I thought of my sisters; Cynthia and Amy trying to say nice things and hide their veritable opinion, and Cordelia pointing out that the trial was such as might have been expected, and that it was my duty to submit to it with resignation in view of my many other blessings. Even such petty considerations as these entered into and swelled my suffering; but the real pain lay in the thought that the dream I had dreamed of a playmate, companion, idol—for yes, he was my idol even then, long before he was born or fashioned—was doomed to destruction; and in a great yearning pity for the little helpless being brought hampered and choiceless into the world. For three days I bore the dread; then my nature reasserted itself, and that law of it which has impelled me always to grapple with misfortune, to desire to know and face the worst as soon as possible, came into force again and led me to put my fears to the touch.

As I crossed the hall to Godfrey's library, I could not help thinking of that other day, a few months before, when I had sought my husband, filled, then too, with misgivings which I had determined must be either swept away or verified. Then it was December and James had been lighting the lamp as I passed; now it was April and a watery sunshine was streaming through the window, making an oblong patch of light on the carpet which was such an eyesore to me. It was an eyesore even now; as I trod upon it, I reflected, somewhere in the back of my mind, how inappropriate it was. Then I forgot the carpet, and gave a little knock on the door of the library. I always knocked before I went into the library; Godfrey liked it, because it gave him a sense that he was a very busy man and must not be interrupted by too sudden an entrance; and I, for my part, was afraid of committing the fault of discovering him in surreptitious slumber. But that day I hardly waited for the answering 'Come in' before I entered the room.



I suppose my face showed something of my trouble, for he said, just as he had said on that other occasion: 'What is it?'

'Godfrey,' I began, 'I've come to speak to you about—you know what I—I mean the doctor——'

'Annie, my dear, try and collect yourself. It is bad for you to be agitated. There, there!'

The 'There there' was accompanied by little pats on the top of my head, for Godfrey had got up from his arm-chair and was standing beside me. Suddenly—it seems a ridiculous thing to say, but somehow I had never thought of it just in that way before—suddenly I realised that he was the father of my child. It was that very fact, of course, which had caused my fears, and yet with the consciousness of the fact strong within me, it had seemed that the baby was altogether my own; in some strange fashion I had not associated Godfrey with it at all. Now the actual truth of the fact came to me in a flash, and seemed at that moment to bring me nearer to my husband than I had ever been. I turned to him with a quick longing for comfort, for support, a wild hope that he would give them to me, and I hid my face—somewhere on his coat; I remember thinking with a sort of despair, which seems comic now but was not comic then, that there was only coat. I don't know how it was, but it always seemed to me that in Godfrey's material form there was nothing helpful to lean upon; in any little grief, father's shoulder had been a sure refuge and resting-place, but I never could feel that there was any refuge about Godfrey, and I failed to feel it then—though I wanted it, oh, so much. I think that at that moment the woman was stirring in me and might have been awaked; but when I cried out, 'Oh Godfrey, help me, help me!' he said in the voice that I knew meant he disliked anything in the way of a scene: 'Do, my dear child, try to tell me what is the matter'; and the woman fell back into sleep, all but the mother part, and never awoke again—for him. All but the mother part; that at least was wide awake; and Godfrey's calm common-sense had braced my nerves while it shut my heart,

and I stood up straight and felt that I could speak the words I had come to say.

'Godfrey,' I said, 'why are Bertram and Ellis—as they are?'

I was always direct, and now, less than ever, could I beat about the bush; but the question and my manner of utterance were perhaps too abrupt, for Godfrey, who was about to seat himself anew in the arm-chair, sat down more quickly than he intended, and a red flush mounted to his forehead. He stammered too a little as he answered:

'Why—why—what do you mean? They were born, I—I suppose, not quite—that is, deficient.'

'Yes, I know,' I went on, and there was no trace of agitation about me now; even Cordelia could not have been calmer. 'I know. That's just it. *Why* were they born so? Was there any reason?'

'What do you mean by "reason"?''

'I mean—was it hereditary?'

'Yes, I suppose so, yes; but—why do you ask?' Godfrey finished quickly.

I answered his words with words, though I felt that my eyes could have given my thought to his quickening perception.

'Why? Because of the child. If the two elder ones——' I faltered and stopped, but there was no need to finish the sentence; Godfrey understood me now.

'Oh, you need not fear,' he said; 'you need not be afraid. It came from their mother's family, not mine; there is no reason to be anxious for your—our child.'

Oh, the relief of it! of the lifting of the weight by those few rapidly spoken words! Though I had trembled under that weight, I think I did not know till then how heavy it had been. I do not know quite what I said or did in the first throes—for it was almost like pain—of the reaction; but I think I laughed aloud, and I think I kissed Godfrey. I remember, at any rate, his standing beside me and patting me on the back, and saying that I was a foolish child not

to have told him of my fear as soon as it came to me. He was very kind, and I was touched by his kindness and very grateful. And happy! I was more than happy as I rushed out into the garden and *ran* round the lawn, and then sat quiet in a little nook in the angle of beech-hedges where the wind did not come, and looked at the last light of the sunset, and forward, forward, to a joy, unclouded now and sure.

Godfrey was very thoughtful and attentive all that evening, and asked me more than once if the boys worried me; and the next day he wrote to London to a shop in Regent Street where was headgear most attractive and expensive and ordered a consignment of hats and bonnets to be sent down for me to choose from. I could not but be glad, for my bonnet, as all my clothes at the time of father's death, had been decided upon by Cordelia; and though I had been too unhappy to care much what I wore, I must say that the bonnet was atrociously unbecoming. For Cordelia and I had different views about dress and never could agree as to what suited my particular style.

## CHAPTER XVI

'Friendship, like love, may leap spontaneously into being, disdaining the womb of time.'

THE new bonnet made me think of Sir Reginald Creagh and that long mirror in the hall of his house where I had suddenly seen a self that I did not at once recognise. I had decided then that I looked too girlish for Godfrey's wife and would choose a more matronly style of clothing in the future ; but alas ! when I tried on the different specimens of Parisian millinery that Madame G—— had sent down, I succumbed to the attractions of a frivolous combination of straw, gauze, and a bow, apparently of the simplest but in reality of subtly dexterous construction, which, though I shamefacedly tried to pretend to myself was of staid and decorous character, I yet knew in my heart did not add a day to my years.

And the very next day, as it happened, after I had decided on that bonnet, Sir Reginald came to call. I felt, when Burge told me he was in the drawing-room, that the visit was almost a reproof, a dotting of the *i*'s and crossing of the *l*'s of the proverb relating to good intentions unfulfilled. Godfrey was out that afternoon attending to some alterations on a distant part of the estate, and I was sitting out in the garden, in my nook between the beech hedges. It was quite warm, one of those soft, sweet days that April brings sometimes, and I had by my side a little table with books on it, and was contemplating the delight of having tea brought out to me ; for all my life I have loved being out of doors, and even now, to do outside things that usually, in our ungracious climate, are done in the house

gives me immense pleasure. So I did not feel inclined to leave my pleasant seat for a gilt-legged chair in the drawing-room, a room I always disliked, so stiff and wealthy and uncomfortable it seemed to me, and told Burge, therefore, to ask Sir Reginald to come out to me in the garden.

'You don't mind?' I said, when he appeared. 'It is so lovely to-day, and there are so many days when one has to be enclosed in walls.'

No, he did not mind, he said; he would far rather be outside than indoors; and settled down quite comfortably into a basket-chair with Turkey-red cushions. I have said that he interested me that day I went to call upon him with Godfrey, and he interested me now as soon as I saw him again. Partly it was, I think, because his thin, keen face gave the impression of unusual intelligence, and partly because I felt him to be at the same time friendly and aloof; it was a sympathetic personality, and yet I was a little afraid of him; though 'afraid' is too strong a word; it was rather shyness, diffidence perhaps, that I felt, than fear. One thing I was sure of at once, and that was that we should talk together much more comfortably, much more at our ease, in Godfrey's absence than in his presence. At first we spoke of what I used to call company things, and I remembered that I was Mrs. Godfrey West and tried to live up to the position, and felt, in spite of my efforts, peculiarly young and not equal to the task of entertaining a guest who had left youth far behind. But presently tea appeared, and there is something—I don't quite know what it is—but something very familiarising about tea; the mere fact of asking a person if he takes sugar seems to bring you nearer to him. So, at least, it has always seemed to me, and certainly so it was on that afternoon. As I ate and drank and passed bread and butter, and put sugar into Sir Reginald's cup—he took two lumps, and so did I—my shyness, whether owing to the tea or to something reassuring in his manner, disappeared, and I found myself talking quite freely; more freely than I had ever talked to anybody except father; and more intimately in a

sense, perhaps, than I had talked even to him. For in the days when father and I had been so constantly together, we had talked chiefly of outer things; of events and people, of likes and dislikes, of what we did and saw, and places we visited together. But since my marriage, and more especially since father's death, I had begun to have an inner existence extending over a wider field than that private country of my girlhood embraced by dreams of romance; I had begun to think a little as well as to dream; though I hardly knew that it was so, or how solitary my mental life had been, till I found myself pouring out confidences to this new friend. It is curious how one seems able sometimes to say to a stranger—or one who is ordinarily considered a stranger—things that one would never dream of saying to one's nearest and most familiar. I never spoke of father to Godfrey; I did not speak of him nor of how much I missed him when I wrote to my sisters; yet here I was, talking of him freely to this man whom I now saw only for the second time; telling of my loneliness, telling even of my longing and my utter inability to follow the dead in my thoughts to any other world, to picture him in any sort of heaven. I say heaven, for though father had been far from what is ordinarily called pious, and though the doctrine of eternal punishment had been taught me by my mother in childhood, I never thought of him as anything but, negatively at any rate, happy and at peace. Hell had had no reality for me since the days when, as a little child, I had awaked sometimes in the night, dreading to hear the blast of the last trumpet and to see flames bursting out from under my crib. So it was of a sort of heaven I thought when I said it seemed so misty and so far away; and: 'I used to be afraid of ghosts,' I added, 'but now I should be glad—I could not be afraid of father's ghost.' Then I stopped short and felt myself getting red, for I had said more than I had meant to say. 'But of course you do not believe in ghosts,' I ended, with a feeble smile.

'Why not?' Sir Reginald answered.

The answer so surprised me that I could hardly reply.

'Oh,' I stammered, 'nobody does, you know; nobody sensible, at least, and—and grown up.' I did not want to say old. 'I don't suppose I do, really—though I have often been afraid of them.'

'I wonder what you mean by ghosts,' Sir Reginald said. 'In my boyhood'—and he smiled—'a ghost used to be a tall, white, formless thing, something like a maypole with a sheet over it.'

'No, I don't mean that,' I answered, and I was too much in earnest to answer his smile. 'But one reads—hears—stories—of—of the dead coming back; and of things happening—strange, uncanny things—different—unlike everyday life.'

'Have you only heard and read of them, or have they ever happened to you?'

I felt the blood rush in a torrent to my face. If his eyes had not been full upon me, I think I should have evaded the question, but there was something in his gaze that destroyed the possibility of even negative falsehood. I told him the truth: that one night, about a week after father died, I had risen from my bed and gone into the boudoir adjoining my bedroom to give free vent to the tears I could no longer hold back; that as I wept, my grief seemed to gather passion, intensity, force; that all this force and passion compressed itself at last into one ardent, overwhelming desire, a concentrated longing for his presence, for some sign, some positive token that the link between us was not wholly broken. And then, all at once, though it was dark and I could not see, though my outstretched hands met only the empty air, I knew that he was with me. Not through the physical senses of touch or sight or hearing was his presence made known, but through an inward sense, sure and true; I *felt* that he was there. And, though he did not speak, yet there was conveyed to me the spirit, if I may so put it, of words, their meaning unuttered; I knew that my grief distressed him, I knew that he sought to comfort me; and, though this last was vague and uncertain, I had an impression as of rest broken, of sleep disturbed. Quite still, my sobs

quieted, my tears stayed, awed, half startled, yet not afraid, I tasted his presence, held communion with his spirit for—I know not how long: time is always hard to measure when emotion is supreme; and it seemed to me in a way that I was outside time.

All this I told to Sir Reginald across the tea-table, forgetting everything else while I spoke, and when I came to the end confused and surprised that I had spoken; for I had never supposed it possible that I should breathe even a hint of this—delusion I tried to call it to myself, though the meaning I put into the word was that of experience—had never dreamed that I should confide it to any human being.

‘It was fancy, of course,’ I said, ‘mere fancy—imagination; but still—as you asked—and it seemed quite real at the time.’

‘And since then?’ was all Sir Reginald said.

‘No, never; that was the only time. I have often longed—hoped, but——’ I shook my head.

‘But never, perhaps, with the same intensity?’

‘No, perhaps not; no, it has never been quite the same.’

Sir Reginald bent a little towards me. ‘Will you take a piece of advice from an old man?’

‘Of course,’ I said; ‘if by the old man you mean yourself.’

‘Then do not long so ardently, do not grieve so passionately; let the thoughts you send to the dead be thoughts of peace.’

‘But,’ I said, ‘but——’

‘Do nothing to bind to the earth the spirit whose rest and progress depend on the loosing of the ties of earth.’

‘But——’ I said again, and then my struggling thought found partial expression. ‘Can anything I think or feel or do, affect—touch—have any power?’

‘Yet your intense longing, your concentrated desire did bring to you—or you thought so—the presence you hungered for.’

‘Yes, I thought so; but—was it more than fancy? Do—do you believe in such things?’

‘I have lived in India,’ Sir Reginald answered, ‘and no



man can spend many years, the greater part of his life there as I have done, no man can mix with and observe the natives and their ways, can know anything of their philosophers or philosophy, and not admit the existence of much that the Western world ignores or derides.'

'Do they believe in—in supernatural things?' I said, my very ears burning in my excited interest.

'I don't know that for them the term exists, or the thing. Nature is a wider word in the East than here; her forces are better known, her powers less circumscribed. I have met men who had the knowledge of laws that science here has not yet stumbled upon, and by means of which they can produce results which to an ordinary Englishman would appear to belong to the region of the marvellous.'

'And these laws, these forces, you have proved—you are convinced?' As I spoke, I heard footsteps on the gravel, and looking across the lawn saw Godfrey coming round the corner of the house. Sir Reginald saw him too, and rose, and at the same time answered—though his words did not seem to me really to answer—my question.

'That which I am most convinced, most conscious of just now,' he said, 'are my own limitations'; and then he went forward to meet Godfrey.

Godfrey was in one of his fussy moods; he had hardly greeted his guest before he took exception to my being out in the garden.

'Have you been here long, Annie? It's not at all prudent so early in the year. If you were to take cold on the chest!'

'But I never take cold on the chest,' I said.

'Or a chill: April is so treacherous.'

'Even April is to be trusted this afternoon, I think,' said Sir Reginald. 'I do not think you need fear for your wife. Even I, an old Indian, am on friendly terms with the climate to-day.'

'Well, I'm sure you ought to be going in now,' Godfrey persisted; 'the best of the day is over, and we shall all be more comfortable indoors.'

I cast a regretful glance around; the garden was very beautiful with the long shadows on the fresh green of the lawn and the flowers bright in the slanting sun-rays; and then I said: 'Very well,' and got up from my seat. So we went and sat in the drawing-room, exchanging the beech hedge and the spring sky and the low basket-chairs for the splendours of the *chambre parvenue*; and we talked company talk and were polite and constrained and all most anxious not to let the conversation drop. Sir Reginald stayed just long enough to avoid giving the impression of taking his leave as soon as his host appeared; then he asked if his horse might be brought round, and from the drawing-room window I watched him mount and disappear round the turn of the drive. I was still standing by the window, looking idly out, when Godfrey came back from the front door.

'Are you very tired?' he asked.

'No,' I answered; 'oh no, not at all.'

'Had he been here long when I came?'

'I don't know, I didn't notice; yes, I suppose he must have been.'

'Poor child! I wish I had been at home to take him off your hands. He is such a difficult person to talk to, and I am sure you must be very tired.'

'No, I'm not; I'm not really, Godfrey.'

But Godfrey would not be convinced; he maintained that I must be tired after entertaining so dull a guest as Sir Reginald, discoursed upon the importance of my not being over-fatigued, and finally insisted upon my retiring to my boudoir to lie down. I submitted, and indeed without much disinclination. I would rather have returned to the garden, but I knew that was impossible, and the solitude of my boudoir was the next best thing. I wanted to be alone, to think over the conversation of that afternoon and the new ideas it had given me; and the time till the dressing-bell rang passed very quickly.

That evening was one of the uncomfortable evenings at Camp Holt. Both my stepsons were sulky; they would not

play at anything together, as they often did, leaving me, in spite of the disputes which were sure to arise, free, in a measure, to enjoy my book: each wanted to play with me alone, and I dared not embark on a game with one for fear of arousing the wrath of the other. So Ellis played Fox and Geese by himself, and Bertram turned over old volumes of *Punch*, and they glared at each other across the table, and moved their chairs about, and dropped things, and kept the atmosphere tense with the threatenings of an outburst, which, however, fortunately did not take place. And all the time there issued from Godfrey's arm-chair the sound of heavy breathing, varied now and again by a trumpet-like snore; and almost as much as a newspaper at breakfast did I dislike snores after dinner. Yet that evening I was neither impatient nor depressed; my mental boundaries had been enlarged, and my mind wandered in excited delight through its newly-acquired territory.

## CHAPTER XVII

'My heart has its secret, my soul its mystery,  
A love which is eternal, begotten in a day.'

GODFREY had said that I should not be troubled by his sons, that their presence should not burden me, that they were not to live at home ; but it was early autumn—September—before his promise took effect, or rather before the boys left Camp Holt. I did not see them after the middle of June, for, by the doctor's advice, I left home then for a house near the sea, which Godfrey had taken for me for the summer ; and when I returned they were gone. They were first to pay a visit to some of their mother's relations and then to go to London to begin the office work which Godfrey, after some difficulty, had obtained for them.

It certainly was pleasant to have the house to myself ; I tried with conscientious endeavour to miss my stepsons, for it seemed so hard on them, poor things, that they should not be regretted ; but though I certainly did miss them, it was not in the way I wanted, and soon I abandoned all attempts of the kind, and honestly avowed that it was delightful to be without them. Godfrey, too, was less fidgety and more cheerful in their absence, and life was altogether easier ; without Bertram and Ellis, and with the expected baby, I felt that I could be very happy.

I remember that autumn well ; it was an autumn of splendid sunsets, of misty mornings, of days so warm in their mid period that one fancied that summer had turned back on the vanishing path of the year and found its way into being again. And all through the sunshiny part of the day I lay out on a

straw couch in the angle of the beech hedges, and on one or two rare, delicious occasions, when Godfrey was away on business, indulged in the pleasure of having my lunch brought out to me ; a pleasure innocent in itself, yet whetted with the charm of guilt, for I knew quite well that had my husband been at home he would not have allowed it ; in Godfrey's mind a well-laid table, a stiff-backed chair, and a room with the windows closed—unless it was *very*, very hot—were as essential to nourishment and digestion as food itself. Then the mornings, when from my boudoir window I saw the shining moisture on the grass rise in a filmy mist towards the sun ! and the evenings, when I paced the broad terrace walk, watching in a frame of pine-trees the ardent glory of the sunset diminish into pale blues and greens, and a tender flush of pink that was like an earnest of the morrow's dawn ! they are with me still, a part of my consciousness that will never pass away till consciousness passes too, and permeated by the thought of the baby, whose advent was approaching day by day.

It was November when he was born, a gray November, for the fine weather finished with October, and the next month was a month of inert and colourless days. Into the fading autumn world he came, a living bit of spring, and for me, as the leaves fell and the skies deadened, the earth blossomed anew.

I had always thought that babies were far from beautiful, and I had never been able to enter into the raptures of my sisters and their nurses over the newly-born infants. I do not for a moment suppose that my baby was different from other babies ; there was the same little face, red, puckered, and full of wrinkles, the same blinking eyes, the same downy head with the same tendency to waggle ; and yet he seemed to stand out separate and distinct from all other children I had ever beheld. I did not think him ugly or uninteresting ; I loved each wrinkle in the screwed-up little face ; I found recognition in the eyes ; I knew that his neck would *not* break, and his head would *not* roll off when I held him, which

was what I had always anticipated when I had tried to take any other baby from its nurse. I had loved him long before he was born, and when he was actually in the world beside me, my love seemed to rise like a wave and break over him. I sometimes think it is the disappointed women who love their children most ; I do not mean necessarily the consciously disappointed, but those who for one reason or another have failed to touch the fulness of life in their husband's love ; love is there in the heart, and, hardly knowing itself an hungered, pours its fulness into maternity. Happy the women who, thus defrauded, are thus consoled, who, losing the one fulfilment, find the other satisfaction ; for there are some in whom the maternal instinct, though not lacking, does nevertheless not suffice as a channel to carry off the flood of all love's needs ; and to these temptations come, error possibly, suffering certainly. The woman who with warm heart and fervent nature has not a full outlet for the forces within, is a woman to whom life—if she did but know it—holds out perpetual danger-signals.

As for me, myself, I hardly knew, I think, how hungry love was in me till it had the child to feed upon, not realising that since father's death my heart had been half starved. I was fond of Godfrey, and fond of my sisters and their children ; but that feeling of 'being fond' is different from the love that satisfies, and I knew the difference as I looked at the absurd little bundle of flesh that lay in the bed beside me. I planned all sorts of futures for him in those days. At one time he was to be Prime Minister ; at another a famous general or admiral who was to bring to a glorious issue wars entered upon, in my imagination, solely that he might distinguish himself : but oftenest it was as a great poet that I dreamed of him, and I heard his name echoed throughout the world in my own age and in ages far ahead ; Arnold West, side by side with Shakespeare, Dante, Homer. For he was called Arnold ; it had been father's name, and I had never thought of any other for him ; and as I say it now, ever so softly to myself, it brings still the thrill caused always by

the names of our best beloved. Cordelia, who came to see me a week after the baby was born, said that Godfrey must be added to the Arnold, and I felt that Cordelia, as was usually the case in all practical matters, was right. The child was accordingly christened Godfrey Arnold; but he was never called anything but Arnold, and it is with that name alone that he is to me always identified.

Cordelia was very kind and gave me a great deal of good advice, both as to the management of the baby and the preservation of my figure. She was, too, as always, most gracious to Godfrey, who was a man after her own heart, being free from any touch of peculiarity and what she called tiresome ideas, and possessing the solid advantages of wealth. She pronounced him, to be sure, to be a trifle *bourgeois*. 'You see it in the drawing-room,' said Cordelia. 'But,' she added, 'it does not really matter, as he has a thoroughly good position in the county. For the climber these things are important; for those who have arrived, they are immaterial; and Godfrey will never offend against the feelings of the neighbourhood.'

I fancied she put a slight emphasis on *Godfrey*, and asked if she thought anybody else was likely to hurt the neighbourhood's feelings. 'I, for instance,' I suggested, 'or the baby?'

To this she replied quite gravely that the baby was too young to offend as yet, but that she did hope he would be properly brought up, and intended to speak to Godfrey on the subject. 'A father has necessarily a large share in the management of a son,' said Cordelia, 'which is why I am glad the child is a boy, for you, Anna, are quite capable of bringing up children with all sorts of ideas unsuited to the battle of life and their position in society.'

It is impossible to argue in a recumbent position, especially when there is a baby close at hand who may wake up at any moment and yell for food, and besides, it never was any good arguing with Cordelia; so I only said that I was glad Arnold had got his nose from my side of the family (which I was

sure he had, though it was such a button of a thing as yet), and asked Cordelia if she would not rather have coffee than tea at five o'clock ; I knew she was particularly fond of coffee. Thereupon she rose and kissed me on the forehead and said I had better rest now, and having drawn down a blind, which was really rather tiresome, as I was not the least sleepy and wanted to look out of the window, she retired with a faint rustling sound to seek Godfrey in his study. That this, at least, was her object in withdrawing, and that it had led to satisfactory results, I inferred from the fact that after she had gone Godfrey remarked that the boy must be sent to Eton. I asked him if he thought it would be too late if he waited till the next day before writing to enter him, but Godfrey looked so annoyed at my flippancy that I hastened to say I thought I should prefer Harrow, merely for the sake of persuading him that I treated the subject seriously ; then, having let myself be convinced by his arguments that Eton was the superior of the two, I succeeded in restoring him to a complacent condition, and he went away quite comfortably to attend to that mysterious business which he transacted with closed eyes in an arm-chair.

And I lay still and thought ; not of schooldays ; I did not want to think of anything so miserable as the child leaving me, and besides they were a long, long way off ; but of the days close at hand, when I should be up and walking about, carrying the baby in my arms ; and of the time when he would be shortcoated, and of the garments he would wear ; there was a particular little coat I had seen in a shop in London which haunted me. And then, quite suddenly, I gave a great leap over the years and saw him as a man. Tall and strong he was, and handsome, and I, his mother, gloried in him, full of pride and love. Oh the pain of it ! as I look back and think and know—the pain that will never die ; though I am contented now.



‘You do not consider . . . how swift he is to  
seen into bewildering fiction

WHEN I was able to be up, and was lying  
my boudoir, Godfrey came to me one  
he supposed I would not mind the boy  
Christmas. Now I had almost forgotten  
in a sense disappeared from my view  
sudden leap into existence again gave me  
but I answered at once that of course  
‘Where else could they go to?’ said I.  
there was their uncle, their mother’s brother  
*could*, of course—no doubt I could arrange

I broke in upon his hesitating suggestion  
they must come home; it is the right place

‘It will only be for a day or two,’ Godfrey  
most. People in offices don’t get off for long

‘They will enjoy being at home, I am  
you think they will like or dislike—this?’  
baby on my knee.

‘Oh, like it, sure to, be very fond of it,’  
but I did not feel quite certain that he was

I soon had an opportunity of inducing

wrong, and I guessed, or divined, that that something was connected with his sons.

'I am very much upset, my dear,' he began.

'Are you? What is it?' I said.

Godfrey did not answer me directly, but fussed about the room, giving vent to broken phrases. 'So disappointing—I had thought—I can't understand—it all seemed so satisfactory——'

'Is it anything about the boys?' I asked, to help him out.

'Yes, it's—I'm sorry to say—it's—it seems that Bertram—— This is from Mr. Ellison'—he tapped the letter as he spoke.

'The man in whose office——'

'Yes, who took Bertram, and he says that Bertram doesn't—is not suitable—in fact, that he can't keep him.'

The words, though I expected them, fell on me like a chill; Bertram would be at home then for an indefinite time, weeks perhaps: but it *was* his home, I told myself; he had as much right to it as my baby; and I tried to make my voice quite even as I said: 'Then he is not to go back after Christmas, I suppose?'

'No, and—in fact—Ellison says something about work being slack—he says he thinks he had better come at once.'

'Oh!' The wretched little monosyllable was all I could bring myself to for the moment; it *was* disappointing, for I had imagined that Bertram was safely started on a career which would not oblige me to see much of him, and this summary dismissal proved that my hope was entirely vain. Such a short time too he had been at his post, and Mr. Ellison, his employer, was under obligations to Godfrey, I knew; evidently Bertram must be worse than useless. Yet I was not surprised. 'Who *would* keep Bertram?' I said to myself; but the reflection was extremely disquieting, and I did not dwell upon it. 'I will tell Price to get his room ready,' I said to Godfrey. 'Poor boy! I dare say he will be

write and tell you——?’

‘Yes, but somehow, I didn’t—what a terrible mistake I believe he had expected to find a boy in breeches!’

‘See! Why, of course,’ I exclaimed impatiently, following his thought. ‘Children are not to be seen until they can see as soon as they are born.’

‘Oh!’ He reflected, then said hesitatingly, ‘You drown the other?’

This was too much for me. ‘How can you!’ I exclaimed, half laughing, half crying. ‘You are a fool, Bertram.’

He took on his hang-dog look and mumbled about the gamekeeper’s wife and his Aunt, but they had each been the mother of twins, and what lines his muddled mind was working out, I did not enter into explanations. For one thing, I was vexed, unreasonably, perhaps, but so it was, my experience had taught me to be very careful of my stepsons: they were such an amazing mixture of ignorance, knowledge, and lack of reticence that I knew what they might not say.

I had rarely been so glad to see Godfrey.

'Sir' and the stern tone in which it was uttered, looked so miserably stupid and uncomfortable, that my vexation melted away.

'Don't begin to scold him now, Godfrey,' I said. 'Let him have his lunch in peace, and then he will be able to tell you how it was that he could not get on at the office.'

But Bertram showed no desire to wait; perceiving from my words what was the cause of his father's displeasure, he became instantly eager to explain.

'It was the lines,' he blurted out, 'in those copying things. They were all exactly alike, and how could I tell where I had got on to?'

'I suppose you copied some parts twice, or several times over, and missed out others altogether?' Godfrey's tone was one of enforced resignation.

'Yes; and then they made such a fuss about blots, and if I scratched anything out.' Bertram's heavy face wore an injured expression, and I was intensely grateful to Arnold for waking up at that moment and crying lustily.

As we went downstairs to lunch I put my arm through Godfrey's.

'Don't find fault with him,' I said. 'It does no good; you know he can't help it.'

'Yes he can; he's not such an utter dolt as he makes himself out; it's carelessness,' Godfrey returned, 'and he must get the better of it. Does he think he's going to be idle all his life?'

Nevertheless my words had their effect, for the scolding Bertram was to have received was foregone in favour of a not unkindly exhortation. This may have been partly due to the lucky chance (it really was luck, for we had a very good cook) that the rice pudding was singed that day, and Godfrey got rid of a good deal of his irritation by railing against the maker of it, and against the housekeeping generally. To be sure, I came in for a certain amount of condemnation, for my husband, like many another, was not always logical in his fault-finding; but I bore it, though generally I chafed rebel-

it as well.

After lunch I retired to my boudoir and forgot that he was in the house, for it had been I realised it more than ever now—to be with sons; but at tea, there he was, with all his habits; and at dinner there he was again. It was horrid of me to feel so unkind draughts with him the whole evening to try my disagreeable thoughts; nevertheless when I still felt as if I had had a holiday, and were over.

It is said that misfortunes never come curious how often one trouble is quickly followed. It certainly was the case at Camp Holt. It was sooner had I resigned myself to the burden it was time for Ellis to arrive for Christmas. He arrived with the disconcerting news that he was no longer needed by his employer. He was, back at Camp Holt for an indefinite time.

'Of course I shall get them something Godfrey, when he had relieved his feelings. I was in the library; an attack which I was in and which also did not seem to me to matter.

In the meantime, here was Christmas day again, and the Christmas dinner. Arnold came down to dessert, attired in a lace robe and soft fat bows of white ribbon, and stared at his half-brothers with uncompromising gaze. Ellis returned the gaze with a certain amount of curiosity and interest. 'A queer little chap,' he said, and wanted to feed him on dates; then, when I explained that such a thing was impossible, he fixed his whole attention upon himself and the fruit dishes. Bertram could not be said to neglect his opportunities in the way of creature comforts, but continually, while he employed himself in emptying a dish of almonds and raisins, I felt his eyes upon me and the baby, though when I looked up, he withdrew them to his plate. It was not only on that occasion, but on many others before and after it, whenever, in fact, the baby was with me and Bertram was present, that I noticed the way he watched me. Sometimes, as I looked up, I thought the expression in his eyes was not altogether pleasant, and I wondered vaguely what it meant. At last I found out.

It was a wet day, and the boys, tired of their own room, instead of returning to it immediately after tea, as was their custom, lingered in the drawing-room. The nurse had brought down the baby, and I, as my habit was, speedily became absorbed in talking to and playing with him. After a while, something—the intuitive sense that I was watched, I suppose—caused me to look up, and there was Bertram leaning against the mantelpiece, and frowning down upon the pair of us.

'Bertram!' I exclaimed, quite startled, for he looked so sullen and almost ferocious. 'What on earth is the matter? Why are you looking at me like that?'

'You don't take any notice of me now,' he answered. 'You don't care; you care only for—for *him*,' and he pointed to Arnold, who was kicking and crowing in my lap.

So that was it, Bertram was jealous. I almost laughed; it seemed so absurd; in the first place, to imagine that there could be any sort of resemblance between my feeling for his

answered him gently instead of with mock my first impulse.

'O Bertram,' I said, 'don't I play dear and patience, just as I have always done?'

'Yes, but that's when *he* isn't there. don't notice me, or anybody, or anything.'

His words nettled me, no doubt because them, for there is a great deal of selfish even passing current as virtue, in maternal knew that I was very much wrapped up in ness at that time. Being nettled, I spoke can't expect me to neglect my baby in order with *you* all day. Especially as this is not to be in the drawing-room.'

'No, only I've been in the schoolroom a collection takes up the whole of the table. well go away,' said poor Bertram.

That was the worst of him; he was, except fits of temper, so easily subdued. I felt it needn't go,' I said, as he moved slowly away silly, Bertram. You see, I went on, as he little brother is quite helpless, and I *must* attract attention when he's with me; while you are

little dainty form, and I was desperately afraid that the elder brother's unmusical chucklings and peculiar grimaces would excite alarmed screams on the part of the younger. But Arnold, I suppose, took the will for the deed, and continued to kick and coo and smile in the most amiable way; and gradually I saw a more real interest come into Bertram's manner, and something that was almost like tenderness dawn in his eyes. So, for the time being, he was quieted; but the jealousy was still there.



## CHAPTER XIX

'Then, if we be wise,  
We make our terms with fate.'

AFTER the New Year, Godfrey set himself strenuously to find employment for his sons. He wrote a great many letters, went up to London more than once, and took no end of trouble. At last he was successful; first Ellis, at the end of January, went off to London, and Bertram followed him a week later. Alas! they were not long away. Before March set in, both were returned upon their father's hands—and on mine, for the matter of that, for I really saw more of them when they were at home than he did—and the whole difficult undertaking of finding something for them to do had to be gone through again. Again Godfrey set himself zealously to the task; again, after much striving, he was successful; again the boys departed on a fresh trial; and again a few weeks exhausted the patience of their employers. Godfrey's patience failed him too then, and his energy as well; and with them went my hope, which had been on the wane for some time, the hope of my husband being able to fulfil the promise he had made me, that his sons should not live at home. It was obvious that they were incapable of doing any kind of work, and the situation having resolved itself, metaphorically speaking, into an unmistakable bull, I thought it better to take that bull by the horns and to bring about a definite understanding.

So, once again, I sought Godfrey in his library, but this time it was to relieve not my own perplexity but his.

'Godfrey,' I said, as he raised a harassed face from the newspaper in which he had been diligently studying the

business advertisements, 'I have come to say that I am quite sure it is useless attempting to find work for Bertram and Ellis. Nobody will ever keep them, and it is much better to accept the fact and to give up worrying yourself by attempting the impossible.'

'But what is to become of them?'

'Nothing; they must go on doing nothing. Fortunately you are a rich man and they *need* not work. They must just go on living at home.' My voice faltered over the last words, for it was hard to me to give up definitely and absolutely my last hope of freedom, and the thought of my stepsons always at home through all the years ahead was like a chain about me. I think Godfrey saw something of what I felt, for he said it was like me to be generous, and that I could not regret more than he did that he was unable to keep his promise; but I saw by his clearing face what a relief it was to him that I had taken the initiative and spared him the difficulty of proposing to me the only possible course.

But before it was decided that Bertram and Ellis were to settle down permanently at Camp Holt, a new friend and a new influence had come into my life. Godfrey returned from his last visit to London in a somewhat fussed condition, and this in spite of the fact that the visit had been successful in that he had obtained employment for his sons. It was his final effort in that direction and proved to be a futile one in the end, but he did not know that at the time, and ought to have been quite pleased and contented. He was, on the contrary, as I have said, in a fussy mood, and inclined to be peevish. I knew at once that there was something wrong from the frequency with which he addressed me as 'my dear,' and from the fact of his coming into my room while I was dressing for dinner and complaining that his shirt was either too much or too little starched—I forget which now. I never could see that I was in any way responsible for the condition of my husband's shirts; there was a private laundry at Camp Holt, and it seemed to me that it would have been so much more logical if Godfrey had stormed, if storm he

must, at the laundrymaid instead of at me. The first time he had come fuming into my room, which was about three months after our marriage, I had suggested this course, but I found the suggestion so far from calming that I had never repeated it. So all I said now, and said it quite meekly, was that I would speak to Mrs. Quaritch, and remarked incidentally that there was lobster cream for dinner. Godfrey was very fond of lobster cream.

It was not till the next morning that I heard what had vexed him. The boys were of course present at dinner (I remember that Bertram spilt some of the lobster cream on his shirt front and made a stain which distressed me all the evening), and after dinner, while they played draughts, Godfrey betook himself to the study of the leading article in his usual fashion, with open mouth and closed eyes and the paper reclining on the floor beside him, so that there was no opportunity for conversation. But after breakfast the next morning he came into my boudoir, and began to hum and haw in a way that I knew meant he had something unpleasant to say. At last he brought it out.

'My dear,' he said, 'I ran up against Judy West yesterday when I was in London.'

'Who is Judy West?' said I, fingering Arnold's little pink toes.

'My brother Tom's wife—widow, I mean. You must have heard me speak of her. My dear, I wish you would give me your full attention.'

I at once put on Arnold's sock, and said: 'I beg your pardon, Godfrey. Yes, the name seems familiar, but I don't think I know anything about her.'

'She fastened upon me—positively fastened upon me,' Godfrey went on, 'and—and invited herself down here.'

'Not uncomplimentary, at any rate. It looks as if she were fond of you.'

Godfrey took no notice of my remark, but went on with a growing impatience of tone: 'Said she was anxious to make the acquaintance of my wife and would like to see Camp Holt again. Of course I could do nothing.'

'But,' I said, 'is there any objection to her coming?'

'Yes, there is. Not that there has ever been any breach; I have always been perfectly good friends with Tom's wife, for Tom's sake, and because somehow she's a woman that you can't exactly quarrel with. But I do not like her.'

'Why?' I asked. 'Is she very disagreeable? What does she do?'

'She is a firebrand,' Godfrey said.

I instantly became interested; we had nothing in the least like a firebrand at Camp Holt, and I thought that the introduction of one might make life more lively.

'A firebrand,' I repeated. 'What does she do?'

'She doesn't *do* anything—not when she is staying with people, at any rate; it's her opinions, her views; she is subversive of—of everything.'

Again I could only repeat Godfrey's words. 'Of everything?' I echoed.

'Of all that is generally considered sacred and—and seemly.'

I was so much impressed that my voice sank. 'When is she coming?'

'Not till the boys have gone.'

'Did you think,' I inquired, 'that she would corrupt the boys?'

'She would corrupt anybody.'

'Me?' I suggested.

Godfrey stopped in his pacing to and fro to kiss me on the forehead. 'No, my darling, I can't say I am afraid of that. You have been too well brought up, and besides I am there to guide and protect you. But I fear you will find the visit a trying one. She is sure to shock you, and you will probably find her tiresome.'

The word suggested Godfrey's opinion of our neighbour at Berkstone. 'Is she more tiresome than Sir Reginald Creagh?' I asked.

My husband reflected. 'N—no, I don't think she is,' he answered at last.

'Then I think I may be able to put up with her,' said I.

interesting. The other picture was of a street too, but of a clearer, brighter darkness, vivid and full of enthusiasms. I liked this picture. I was inclined to think, from the little Godfrey came when I could judge for myself. I did for Godfrey's accounts of his sister-in-law alarming; but I longed for it too, for though now to occupy a good deal of my time and was monotonous, and I had all youth's love and change.

## CHAPTER XX

'I think there never was a dearer woman,  
A better, kinder, truer than you were.'

THE firebrand arrived in time for tea. The luggage brougham was sent to the station to meet her, but Godfrey did not go in it as he had done in the case of Cordelia.

'I don't want to appear too anxious to have her here,' said he.

I thought to myself that the extreme caution he displayed was unnecessary; Godfrey's manner at any time was not apt to err on the side of excessive warmth, and when he was not genially disposed towards a person, I defy that person to have imagined an over-eagerness of welcome.

'Mrs. Thomas West.'

I had just lighted the spirit-lamp beneath the kettle when Burge opened the drawing-room door and announced our guest. Godfrey rose and went forward. 'How do you do, Judy? I hope you are not cold after your journey. This is my wife.'

'Not like either of them,' I said to myself; I was referring to my mental pictures. Judy West was neither tall nor short; she certainly was not angular or aggressive; neither was she the very vivacious person I had half expected. Slender, but not thin; well-made, though not strikingly so; dressed simply in a gray travelling-dress, she looked to me, at that first glance, much like any visitor from the neighbourhood who might have been ushered in at that hour. I was disappointed. Where was the firebrand element? There was nothing peculiar, nothing remarkable, nothing alarming even, here.

...of her views, and attraction warring with his convictions t bitter against her. It was a pale face, quite by nature, framed by brown hair, fine and was thought in the brow, character in the certain defiance about the mouth. The eyes were sad, I fancied, as I met them first, but so brightly when their owner began to talk must have been mistaken.

'Have you made many changes since was saying as I passed her a cup of tea. See the room. 'Not much difference in this still as fond of guilt, Godfrey, I see. By the way with a sudden little reflective air which I was characteristic of her, 'I wonder why to be a mistake to take guilt off gingerbread think the metaphor is a happy one, for prefer the gingerbread without it. Wouldn't to me.

'Yes, I should, for I like gingerbread without guilt.'

I was sorry for the words as soon as I for Godfrey was obviously displeased. 'Enough place,' he said. 'and guilt is admirably suited

then she turned to me: 'Does the baby come down after tea?'

'Yes, he will be here presently.'

'I should like to see him.'

I thought this remark very cold; most people said they were longing for a sight of Arnold, and spoke of him as a little duck, and said all sorts of pleasant things about him; and my sympathy, which had gone out to the stranger, was inclined to retreat. Presently she said she would like to go to her room, and I went upstairs with her, calling in at the nursery for Arnold on my way back. Godfrey was lingering about the drawing-room when I returned to it.

'Do you think you can manage with her till dinner-time, Annie?' he asked. 'I have some letters I want to write, and I shall be here all the evening, and will take her off your hands as much as possible.'

'Oh yes, I can manage all right,' I answered; though, to tell the truth, I was a little doubtful, for if the new comer did not care about Arnold, I felt that, with Arnold in my lap and claiming my attention, I should not find her easy to get on with. However, there was nothing more to be said; Godfrey disappeared with the tea things, and the baby and I were alone when Judy came back. She came in very quietly; I should hardly have noticed her entrance but for the faint click of the door, for she wore a soft trailing garment which made no sound as she walked. Nowadays it would be called a tea-gown, but in those days tea-gowns were not, and this garment had been imagined by herself; it was so comfortable to put on after coming in in the afternoon, she said, when one wanted to be at ease and free from the stiff, conventional bodice. She came and stood beside me, and looked down at Arnold as he lay contentedly cooing in my lap.

'I can't talk baby-talk, you know,' she said; 'perhaps because I never had any children of my own. I wonder,' she put in with her reflective air, 'if they really understand it any better? But he is a beauty, your baby. I should like to give him a kiss. Do you think he would mind?'



‘Mind? Of course not; he’s used to kisses. He wouldn’t’—I was half indignant—‘he wouldn’t be happy without kisses.’

‘I used to hate it so when I was a child,’ said Judy. ‘My memory doesn’t go back as far as babyhood, of course, but I remember when I was quite, quite small, and I did so hate people slobbering over me.’ She stooped and kissed the baby once, very gently, on the cheek, then raised a little dimpled hand and arm and pressed her lips to them many times. ‘Poor darling! you can’t say whether you hate it or not, but you won’t mind your *hand*, I know.’ She looked up at me. ‘Some people, you know, give such wet kisses.’

‘Yes,’ I said reflectively, ‘they do’; and I thought of a certain uncle whose caresses, when I was a child, had been a positive trial to me. ‘I believe you are right; people don’t consider when they kiss children whether they like it or not.’

‘One half of affection, so called, is selfishness,’ Judy affirmed, then she became reflective again. ‘I wonder what I should have been like if I had had a child of my own; I believe I should have half eaten it. But I suppose they don’t mind their own mothers.’

‘I’m sure they don’t,’ said I. ‘But you, not a mother, are the first person I ever met who stood up for the rights of babies.’

‘Oh, I stand up for the rights of everybody,’ Judy answered carelessly. ‘Or the wrongs, perhaps, is a better way of putting it, for there is far more wrong than right in the world, I think.’

‘Oh, do you?’ I cried. I was almost aggrieved; since Arnold’s birth, the vague questioning which had stirred in me at the time of father’s death had sunk into quiescence again, and the world seemed to me quite a cheerful place.

I suppose my face and voice showed what I felt, for Judy at once saw the effect of her words.

‘I have vexed you,’ she said. ‘Yet,’ with a curious smile—‘I could not determine whether it was mocking or melan-

choly—‘I suppose you were prepared for something of the kind. Godfrey told you I should shock you, didn’t he? You need not answer; it would not distress me if you said yes, but I know it would distress you to have to say it. Let us talk of something else.’

‘No,’ I answered. ‘I want to know—why do you think that—that there’s more wrong than right in the world?’

Judy had left my side, and was sitting now on a low square seat close to the fire; her hands were clasped about her knees, and I remember how the firelight caught the rings on her fingers, and threw sudden lights upon her face. She cast down her eyes before speaking, and then looked up at me. ‘What’s the good?’ she said, half laughing. ‘You, my dear, are in the condition of Browning’s Pippa—

“God’s in His heaven; all’s right with the world.”

It’s a very happy condition, and what is the good of my knocking down walls and opening windows, and showing you the Sebalds and Ottimas and Maffeos behind them?’

‘I know,’ I said, ‘that there is misery in the world and suffering, but I can’t believe that the good does not balance the evil.’

‘I wanted to see you,’ Judy went on irrelevantly. ‘I had heard about you from several people, and I wondered—no, I won’t tell you what I wondered. But now that I have seen you, I would much rather not be the person to wake you up.’

My pride scented disparagement in the words, for I thought myself, as most young people do, very wide awake. ‘What do you mean,’ I cried, and I felt the colour rush into my cheeks, ‘by “wake me up”?’

‘Godfrey would not like if I were always to explain what I mean,’ she answered. ‘He thinks my conversation quite unpleasing enough as it is; edited with notes, he would consider it positively harmful—corrupting, very likely.’

‘I don’t believe,’ I exclaimed impulsively, ‘that you would corrupt a fly.’

Judy smiled, radiantly; it is the only word to express the light that came into her face. 'You dear!' she said; then, quite gravely: 'No, you're quite right, I wouldn't, willingly or knowingly. But Godfrey thinks I would, which comes to the same thing—at Camp Holt at least.' She rose. 'I must go and dress for dinner. I take some time to dress, and though I have brought Katherine, I don't like her fussing about me.'

'We shall be quite alone,' I began; 'there's nobody——'

'Oh, I dress because I like it,' said Judy, 'though I don't mean anything uncomplimentary to you and Godfrey by that. But if I didn't—well—— Good-night, baby.' Again she raised Arnold's hand and kissed it. 'I think babies' hands are *the* most delicious things—next to their feet. How good he is! and quite pretty—for his age.'

'How did you get on?' Godfrey asked, coming into my room half an hour later.

'Oh, very well.' I made my tone indifferent, though, truth to tell, I was decidedly well disposed towards our guest. 'She is not difficult to talk to.'

'She talks a great deal,' said Godfrey, in a voice which implied that it might have been better if Judy had said less.

'It makes it easier than if she were very silent,' said I; and Godfrey agreed, adding that he would take the burden of entertaining her upon himself the next morning.

## CHAPTER XXI

'Ce que nous prenons pour des vertus n'est souvent qu'un assemblage de diverses actions et de divers intérêts que la fortune ou notre industrie savent arranger, et ce n'est pas toujours par valeur et par chasteté que les hommes sont vaillants et que les femmes sont chastes.'

JUDY arrived on a Friday, and she stayed with us till the next Wednesday. During the intervening days there were many times when Godfrey was not taking her off my hands, and many occasions consequently for conversation. In the course of these conversations I began to understand what Godfrey meant by the firebrand element, for some of Judy's ideas startled and shocked, though others simply amused me. I was not conscious of being influenced or convinced by much that she said; yet I suppose her words sank into my mind and had their effect upon its workings, for in after days I found myself recalling and considering them.

One day, I remember, she spoke to me of her husband. I had often wondered what Godfrey's dead brother had been like, and whether Judy had been fond of him, and had asked myself if the pathetic look she sometimes wore were due to his loss. But there was nothing pathetic either in her face or her voice when she spoke of him that day as we walked in the woods.

'Horse chestnuts always remind me of Tom,' she said; 'they were his favourite trees.'

I longed to say something, but was afraid; I have always been afraid, all my life, of touching the sore places in people.

But Judy felt my question ; she was very quick in those ways ; and turned her eyes upon me.

‘What is it, Annie? Out with it! I know you are quivering with suppressed inquiry.’

‘I was only wondering if you missed—if you were very fond of him,’ I stammered, with a reddening face.

Judy’s face, which had been smiling, grew grave. ‘I did miss him ; you cannot but miss a person you have lived with for eight years. But I was not particularly fond of him.’

‘Oh!’ I said. It seemed dreadful to hear her say it, and yet somehow, the candour of the answer gave me a thrill which was not altogether unpleasant ; it was so utterly opposed to what Cordelia would have thought proper.

‘Yes, it’s a case of oh!’ Judy went on. ‘I ought to have been fond of him, I know, for he was very kind to me. But you see we did not suit ; at least I suited him very well, I think—the part of myself that I gave to him, but he did not suit me.’

‘What was he like?’ I ventured to ask.

‘Like?’ She reflected. ‘A little like Godfrey.’

‘But younger?’

‘Oh yes, by fifteen years. He was the youngest and Godfrey the eldest, and they were a large family originally, as you know, though so few of them grew up. He was very kind, and very honourable and trustworthy, and——’ She broke off and looked at me with a queer look, half comic and half deprecatory. ‘My dear, he ought always to have been called Thomas and not Tom ; that explains him better than anything I can say.’

‘I see,’ I said, and a pale portrait of Judy’s husband rose up before me ; a portrait with a decided resemblance to Godfrey.

‘I was a good wife to him,’ Judy went on. ‘I have nothing to reproach myself with in that way ; he was quite happy, to the very end. Where I was wicked was in marrying him.’

‘Wicked!’

‘Yes, for I married him without love, selfishly, because marrying him meant a home.’

‘And you were homeless?’

‘Altogether. My father was that miserable thing, the tail end of an old Irish family. While he lived, we scrambled along somehow; when he died, there was nothing.’

‘You are Irish, then?’

‘Shure it’s meself that has the blood of ould Oireland pure in me veins entoirely—with the exception that me mother was an Englishwoman,’ said Judy, with a brogue that you might have cut with a knife, as the saying is. The fun which had leapt into her voice went out of it again, and she returned to ordinary English. ‘A marriage of that kind is what I call immoral. It wasn’t so exactly, in my case, because I understood nothing about it, or myself, or life. If I were to do such a thing now——’ She paused and took on her reflective air. ‘I am not sure, if a woman does that sort of thing knowingly, deliberately; sells herself, that is to say, for money, lodging, and clothes; I am not sure that she wouldn’t be less immoral, really, ethically I mean, apart from the social offence, if she were to do it without marriage.’

‘O Judy!’ I cried, ‘what do you mean?’

‘Just this, that there are cases in which it seems to me less immoral, less degradin’, to be a man’s mistress than his wife.’

‘O Judy!’ I said again. It was all I could say; I had never heard such subjects touched upon before, and I was overwhelmed by her words.

She did not heed me, but went on, walking very fast as she spoke. ‘I hate cant, moral as well as religious. I know it has to be, because it is only the few who are strong enough and clean enough to be inevitably pure, from the love of purity for its own sake; the mass of people need conventions and the outsides of things to cling to and keep them straight. Society as it is now requires cant; it is a sort of cement which holds it together. I know it has to be, but I hate it. Do you mean to tell me’—she turned with flashing eyes upon me—‘do you mean to tell me that to go into a church and tell a lie before the very altar is morality?’ Her voice changed. ‘I know I exaggerate; I know there are women,

honest and pure and good, who marry for one motive or another without what I call love, but honestly respecting the men they marry, meaning to do their duty by them, hoping to give them a true affection. But that's not what I mean; I mean the women who just for the love of luxury or wealth or position, out of idleness or vanity or greed——' She broke off suddenly. 'Dear Annie, forgive me! Here am I saying all sorts of things I meant not to say to you, and distressing you, I know. Why those are eyes that look as if the tears were not very far away.'

In truth I was distressed, for her words had raised all kinds of doubts in my mind. I thought of my own marriage, and began to wonder if I had perjured myself, and been wicked when I had meant to be good. 'No, no,' I faltered, 'I see so much of what you mean. But there are cases—I knew a girl——' And I proceeded to state, as the case of a friend, my own case. 'Do you think she was wrong?' I said at the end. 'Do you think she was immoral and—and all that you said? She tries, I know she tries, to do all that she ought to do, and she has never regretted it.'

All the fire had gone out of Judy's eyes; they were quite soft now and gentle as they met mine, though I thought there was a sort of a twinkle in them.

'I think she was unselfish and sweet, and as innocent and pure as the babe unborn,' said Judy. She stopped, impulsively put her hands upon my shoulders, and kissed me. I could not help feeling that she had seen through my subterfuge, and indeed as I look back, I smile at the simplicity which imagined that anybody could be deceived by it. But somehow I did not mind; I had an intuitive sense that any secret, whether voluntarily confided or unconsciously betrayed, was perfectly safe with Judy. I knew now though, I thought, what Godfrey meant by saying she was 'subversive'; and before she went away, I had another opportunity of seeing that, though in ordinary conversation she avoided putting forward her own ideas, if roused to a certain pitch of feeling, she was apt to run a tilt against the prejudices of her neighbours.

The evening before she left, we had a dinner-party. This was quite an event, being indeed the first entertainment that had been given at Camp Holt since my marriage, and I was greatly excited about it. It was long since I had been to any sort of party, not since the days of my girlhood, when I had gone to balls with father, and as I dressed for dinner, something of the old feeling of delightful anticipation came over me. If only there were to be dancing, instead of eating ! and strains of wistful waltz music came floating through my brain while Campbell did my hair. Then came the thought of father, and that if I were to go to balls again, he never could be with me any more, that I never should see him standing watching me while I danced, never should meet his smile, never should find him waiting for me, kind and gay, whenever I had need of him ; and my desire for balls and dances seemed to pass away.

When I was dressed I went, my cheeks flushed with excitement, to Judy's room. She had sent her maid away, and was standing before the glass, fastening a curious, old-fashioned brooch into the bosom of her gown. I went and stood beside her, and when I saw how pink my cheeks were, I envied her the cool pallor of her face.

'Do you know,' she said, addressing my reflected image, 'do you know, Mrs. Godfrey West, that you look very pretty to-night ?'

'Not as pretty as you,' I answered, and meant what I said, for though I knew I was pretty, I honestly thought Judy much prettier than myself. She answered with the candour peculiar to her, and which somehow was always free from the sting that so-called frankness of speech so often carries.

'No, not prettier ; more attractive, perhaps ; but that is only because I am older than you ; and because a woman is often more attractive than a girl.'

'But I am a woman,' said I, aggrieved.

'In status ; not in feeling. Some women are girls all their lives, so to speak ; yes, even though they are married.'

'What makes a woman, then ?'



'Suffering or—— But I don't know that I want to see the marks of suffering in that face. Let us go downstairs. Nevertheless,' Judy remarked, as we descended the staircase, 'I think it will come.'

'What?' I asked. But Judy did not answer.

We found Godfrey in the drawing-room in a somewhat irritable mood.

'You are very late, Annie. Don't you know that a hostess should always be ready in good time to receive her guests?'

'It is only twenty-five minutes past seven,' said I, 'and they were not asked till half-past.' People dined earlier in those days, especially in the country, than is the fashion now.

'This clock is slow.' Godfrey took out his watch. 'By railway time—— There, I told you so; I hear wheels already.'

'Well, I *am* down,' I said meekly.

The guests arrived all one on the top of the other, and for the next ten minutes I did nothing but shake hands and agree with the statement that it was a cold evening. I do not remember much about the earlier part of the dinner; the weather was discussed, and the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, which was undergoing one of its periodical airings. I remember that, because there was an old Sir James Farley who objected to it on what seemed to me such curious grounds. 'If there is a second family,' said he, 'the relations of the children are so complicated; they are cousins as well as half-brothers and sisters, and double relationships are always to be deprecated.'

'How about the man who married his father's mother-in-law?' said I. 'I knew of such a case. The father, when he was over sixty, married a girl barely out of the schoolroom, and the son, who was thirty-eight, married the mother, who was just his own age.' But Sir James evidently thought I meant to be frivolous; he only shook his head and plunged into an iced soufflé.

Dessert was on the table, and the servants had left the room, when I noticed that the attention of several people

was directed to a particular part of the table, perceived on Godfrey's face the look which meant that somebody was doing something which ought not to be done, and became conscious that Judy was on the warpath.

'I never could understand,' she was saying, when I too began to listen, 'I never could understand why people are so fond of calling attention to the fact that they are Christians, and then deliberately doing exactly contrary to what Christ taught.'

Several people looked shocked. 'So irreverent,' one lady murmured; then to the man on her left: 'Who *was* she?'

I have since noticed that to speak of religion as if it had any practical bearing on the affairs of life is constantly considered irreverent.

'They hear it read out to them in church,' Judy went on, 'that Christ consorted with publicans and sinners, and if after church they come across any recognised publican—metaphorically speaking, of course—or sinner, they cut him or her—especially her—dead.'

'But, my dear Mrs. West,' said the Vicar, 'our Lord'—and everybody instantly looked uncomfortable—'our Lord consorted with such people for the purpose of calling them to repentance.'

'Of course, but He made friends with them first. He didn't give them the cold shoulder, and call them to repentance from the further side of respectability. He let them touch Him with their dirty hands.'

The lady who had inquired who Judy was, here asked her neighbour for a little water.

'I don't think you are quite fair,' somebody said. 'It was different. He was different.'

'Yet to be a Christian is to be like Him.'

'For us to do such things would be to countenance evil.'

'You might as well say that it is countenancing sickness to nurse a person who is ill. Are we so pure—or so corrupt—that we dare not run the risk of a stain?'

'You cannot touch pitch and not be defiled,' said the County Magistrate.

'You *don't* touch pitch unless you are pitchy, any more than you can grasp the meaning of poetry unless you are something of a poet, any more than you can touch matter without a corporeal hand. In all the world, no man can see or hear or touch anything, unless he has the possibilities of contact within himself.'

At this point, in obedience to frantic, but hitherto unavailing signs on Godfrey's part, I managed to catch Judy's eye, passed on to the eye of the Countess on Godfrey's right hand, and rose from the table. I noticed that as Judy left the room she gave my husband a little side glance, and that Godfrey looked steadily over her head.

Judy behaved quite meekly in the drawing-room; as soon as coffee had been served, she offered to sing, and her singing wrought a reaction in her favour; doubtful glances ceased, features softened, and even the lady who had been anxious as to her origin, thanked her in quite a cordial voice. For Judy had the gift of song; a pathetic voice that touched the source of tears, and caused vibrations in hidden strings of the consciousness; a dramatic instinct that urged to emotional expression; an art that enabled her to control that expression as she would. When the gentlemen came in from the dining-room, she was still at the piano, and she remained there, sometimes singing, sometimes talking, always a centre of attraction, most of the evening. I considered, indeed, that Judy made the success of the dinner-party; but I knew that Godfrey would not see that, and that he was angry with her. When the last guest had gone, his vexation broke forth.

'I do wish, Judy, whatever views you may think it proper to express in your own house, that you would be careful what you say in mine.'

'I didn't say anything *very* bad, Godfrey. And I said nothing about morality, which I know is what you dislike most.'

'I do *not* like to have my guests shocked, and to see people shaking their heads over you.

'Who shook their heads?'

'Lord B—— for one. I saw him more than once while you were holding forth——'

'But he didn't, Godfrey; it waggles of itself, because he is old and drinks so much port.' Her voice and manner changed from lightness to a sedate deprecation. 'But I beg your pardon. I know I am apt to be aggressive, I know I say things often that do no good.'

'You are so positive,' Godfrey affirmed.

'I know,' Judy said humbly, but not taking the word quite in the sense in which he meant it; 'but I do so hate negative things. It's why I have so much more patience with wickedness than with weakness'—she was walking up and down the room now—'with the glaring sins than the mean ones; it's why I would always rather be hung for a sheep than a lamb; it's why I prefer so infinitely the blasphemer to the hypocrite.'

She stopped before Godfrey, who was standing on the hearth-rug with his back to the fire and his legs very wide apart.

'I am going away to-morrow, and so I shan't be able to make you angry again for a long time. Won't you forgive me? Shure an' it's meself that's brimmin' over wid repentance.'

Her voice was so pleading, the brogue into which she sank so soft, that Godfrey was mollified; that is to say, that he smiled upon Judy, and complained to me afterwards, when he came up to bed, of the impropriety of women putting themselves forward. And this I thought rather hard, for I had shocked nobody.

## CHAPTER XXII

'From lethargy to fever of the heart . . .  
From trust to doubt ; from doubt to brink of ban.'

WHEN Judy had gone, I felt very lonely for a while, for I missed her sadly. If it had not been for Arnold, I do not know what I should have done, so empty the house seemed in the absence of her pronounced personality ; but Arnold was a never-failing interest, joy, and resource from the hour he was born, and so long as I had him to turn to, life had always a sweet savour.

And now I come to a disagreeable episode in my existence, and must tell of something that humiliated, distressed, and altogether upset me. I would leave it out if I could ; but each incident in a life is a link in a chain, and the dropping of a link means a loss of sequence. I have said, I think, that Judy's visit took place shortly before the final return of my stepsons from their business experiments in London, and that by April they were permanently established at Camp Holt. I have also spoken of Bertram's jealous feeling in regard to Arnold, and told how I had succeeded in quieting that feeling. But it was quiet only for a time ; when the two young men had settled down at home again and fallen back into the routine of their ordinary life, the jealousy revived and showed itself constantly. Ellis, indifferent generally towards the baby, was also, as a rule, gently and friendly with him, though once I caught him giving a sly pinch to one of the soft little arms ; but this was rather, I believe, out of curiosity as to the result, than out of malice. But Bertram,

during those spring days, displayed a growing hostility towards his little brother, which for some time I could not understand; and while his dislike of the baby increased, his demands on my time and attention increased too. Never was there an evening now when Bertram would amuse himself or play a game alone with Ellis; he was not content unless I would take part in what he was doing, and constantly I found his dull eyes fixed upon me with a look which puzzled and vaguely displeased me. Then, too, he would join me as I strolled in the garden, make excuses for coming into my boudoir, and pester me with clumsy attentions, which I bore with as much patience as I could command, because, when I contrasted him with Arnold, I felt so sorry for him, and thought with pity of the poor woman who was dead, and who, had she lived, would have wrapped him about with her mother's love. And all the time it never occurred to me—how should it?—what was the meaning of his jealousy and his awkward devotion. I need not linger over the details of that uncomfortable time, nor relate at length how at last the truth was forced upon me. I need not reproduce all that memory gives back to me across the gulf of years. But I shall never forget the horrible morning when I became aware of that truth. I shall never forget the dismay and the repulsion which crept over me as Bertram poured out upon me the meaning of the past weeks. Since then I have been able to see the pity of it, to understand the pathos of that stunted life, cut off from the romance of love, the happiness of marriage, stirred by nature to the development of normal instincts, wrestling with nature, swayed by her, yet doomed by the laws of nature to a crippled and abortive fate. Since then I have seen all this, and seeing it have been able to wipe out the repulsion, and to regard Bertram—yes, and both my stepsons—with a pitying and veritable tenderness; but at the time horror and disgust were the sole sentiments that held me, and it was long before I learned to overcome them.

I did not know what to do, it seemed to me that it was

impossible that I could go on living in the same house as Bertram ; and yet I knew not how to open a door of escape. I dared not tell Godfrey. For one thing, the rheumatic affection which, in a negative way, had been troubling him for some time, had begun now to take an active form ; he was suffering, irritable, and easily upset ; I knew he would be intolerantly angry with his son, and I thought he might possibly be angry with me too. I decided that I could not tell him what had happened, and yet, without telling him, I feared that it would be impossible to induce him to send Bertram away for a time—I knew it could be only for a time. And my fear was well founded. When I suggested to Godfrey that his sons should pay some visits to their relations, he refused to entertain the suggestion, and implied, in what he said, that he thought me somewhat unreasonable. The boys had not long returned from London, he argued ; if, according to my own proposal, they were to live permanently at Camp Holt, the time for them to go and pay visits was not just after they had been away. I recognised the strength of the argument, and had nothing more to say, seeing that I could not say the truth ; but I was very miserable, and hardly knew how to hide from my husband that something serious was wrong. But for Arnold, I believe, I might have run away or done something foolishly desperate, but Arnold was my guardian angel then as later. And I had nobody to consult. I knew that if I wrote to Cordelia, she would only reply that that sort of thing never happened to *her* ; I knew that confiding in Cynthia meant confiding in Norman, and that a difficulty such as mine did not occur to what Norman called nice women ; and I knew that Amy would think the difficulties of the situation existed chiefly in my imagination, and were not of serious importance. If Judy had been in London, I would have written to her ; but she had gone abroad and was travelling I knew not where, and it seemed no use to send a letter to her home address to follow and find her I knew not when. So I was very much alone, and the continual snubbing of Bertram, necessary in the circumstances, and the having

meals alone with my stepsons, for Godfrey did not come downstairs till shortly before dinner at this time, made a strain which I found hard to bear.

Curiously enough, it was my stepsons themselves who, without intending it, but very effectively, helped me out of the situation in which Bertram had placed me. I have said that Godfrey was suffering, and disposed, in consequence, to be irritable, and it was not long before his sons began, as the saying goes, to get on his nerves. Whether the fact of their father being so much confined to his room caused them to be more careless and rough in their behaviour than usual; whether Bertram, certainly more restless, was as a result more noisy and clumsy than his wont, I cannot say; I only know that the two young men did assuredly seem to be especially obtrusive in sound and act at this period, and that Godfrey was constantly fretted and annoyed by them and their ways. The result was that he finally suggested that Mr. Lillingworth should be asked to come to Camp Holt for a time and look after them. The suggestion was like a flash of sunlight to me; if I could not get rid of Bertram, the next best thing was to have somebody to stand between him and me. The only doubt in my mind was as to whether Mr. Lillingworth could be induced to come, the distilling, the journalism, and the political training of which Ella Craven had spoken, seeming to me to constitute strong obstacles in the way of his undertaking to look after my stepsons. However, considerably to my surprise and enormously to my relief, the young man replied that he would come with pleasure. 'I can easily get away from work for a time,' he wrote, 'and I dare say that I shall be able to get a little time to myself every day for writing, so as not to blight my journalistic prospects.'

I began to feel quite cheerful after the receipt of this letter, and on the day of Mr. Lillingworth's arrival, I myself arranged flowers in his room to welcome him, and directed nurse to attire Arnold in his best frock. I little dreamed, as I busied myself in arranging for the new comer's comfort, that I was preparing to jump out of the frying-pan into the fire.



## CHAPTER XXIII

'And in a mirror looked upon Love's face.'

MR. LILLINGWORTH arrived in the best of health and spirits. He seemed really pleased to be back at Camp Holt, and apparently regarded his stay there as a sort of holiday.

'The gov'nor didn't quite rise to it at first,' he confided to me over the tea-table, for on the afternoon of his arrival he had tea with me in the drawing-room, and as Godfrey had not yet come down, we were *tête-à-tête*; 'but he's an old friend of your husband's, as you know, and did not care to refuse him; and then I finally persuaded him that I really was in need of rest and change. I've been working simply like a slave lately, and am tired out.' He looked at me with the freshest, healthiest face, out of eyes which had no trace of fatigue about them, and I could not help laughing.

'What are you laughing at?' he inquired, aggrieved.

'You don't *look* very exhausted,' said I.

'Oh, that's because I have a face which doesn't show things. But it's really a shame, Mrs. West. I've been pegging away at the distillery; and what with journalism and—and one thing and another, I assure you I'm pretty well played out. May I have another cup of tea? and strong, please; I find it's a sort of pick-me-up.'

'Have you been writing much?' I asked, preternaturally grave, as I filled a cup with unwatered tea and very little milk. I remembered that Ella Craven had spoken in terms almost of awe of this young man and his achievements, and here was I treating him with positive levity.

'Yes—no—that is to say, not quite lately. I wrote an

article for the *Field* last month. I've got a copy of the number with me; perhaps you would like to see it?'

'Oh, very much. But—but I thought it was political articles you wrote. Ella Craven—I think you know her——'

'Oh yes, a little—that is, pretty well. Clever, isn't she?'

'I am sure she is. I suppose all artists are,' said simple I.

'Well, I don't know; some of those Academy fellows, you know—commonplace conceptions—dull schemes of colour, I think. But Ella—Miss Craven, I mean—ought to have a career.'

'Oho,' said I to myself. 'Ella—Miss Craven, I mean—and the budding politician seem to be mutually admiring.' Aloud I remarked that I had not seen any of Ella's pictures. 'She did not paint while she was here.'

'While she was here? Oh yes, she stays here sometimes, doesn't she? I remember now that she told me. Has she been here lately?'

The studied indifference of Mr. Lillingworth's voice amused me. 'You *know* she hasn't,' I very nearly said, but I was kind. 'No, not for some time,' I answered. 'I was thinking of asking her to come as soon as Godfrey is better.'

'Ah, indeed. I should be glad to meet her again,' Mr. Lillingworth replied, still with the exaggerated indifference; and then Arnold appeared and put an end to his unintentional confidences.

Bertram and Ellis were both glad to see the young man again, and I at once began to feel the comfort of his presence in the house. He really was wonderful in the way he managed my stepsons; he made no fuss and seemed to take no trouble; yet he certainly did manage them; kept them interested, employed, and—the chief thing as far as Godfrey was concerned—comparatively quiet. For my part, the great relief that I found was in the mere fact of his being there. There were no more of those awkward meals alone with my stepsons, during which, to escape from the attentions or sulkiness or staring eyes of Bertram, I had been constrained to make

spasmodic but futile attempts at conversation with Ellis; and in the evenings Stanhope Lillingworth made a fourth if I joined in a game with the boys, or took them altogether off my hands.

As the days went by, I understood Ella's liking for him. I never succeeded in thinking him particularly clever, and as I look back now I am sure that I did not underestimate his intellectual capacity; but he had a kindly, buoyant nature, considerable force of character, and—though what I shall have to relate by and by will hardly seem to bear this out—was worthy of trust and confidence.

I began to enjoy life again after Stanhope Lillingworth's arrival, especially as Godfrey about this time took a turn for the better, and was soon able to come down to the library before lunch; so that my attendance upon him was no longer so constant, and I had more time to play with Arnold and be out in the garden, lovely then with the beauty of early summer. It happened that when my stepsons had gone off on their morning ramble with the dogs, Stanhope often found his way to me there, and we talked together eagerly of many things. We were too different in temperament to agree upon most subjects. His was one of the so-called practical minds which are interested only in the concrete things and aspects of life, and I was by nature a dreamer; speculative and inquiring, although at that time I did not realise my own tendencies, where he was positive and confident: his aim in life was tangible success; mine, ideal achievement. But we had the bond of youth, and I, at least, was hungry with the hunger that comes from lack of companionship; to talk to some one who was near me in age, who was interested in some, at any rate, of the things which interested me, was a keen pleasure, and the hours I spent with Stanhope Lillingworth acted on me like a tonic.

At first we talked a good deal about Ella Craven. Stanhope had a way of introducing her into the conversation which was both naïve and significant, and as I was fond of Ella, it was not other than pleasant to me to hear him sing her praises.

Moreover, since that first conversation at the tea-table, the match-making element, inherent, I believe, in every woman, had become active in me, and I was enchanted with the idea of helping to bring about a marriage between the two young people. To be sure, there was nothing to prevent the course of true love from running quite smooth, for Stan's prospects, from the point of view of wealth, were unusually good; and in my then attitude of mind, the absence of difficulties seemed somewhat of a drawback. Nevertheless I was eager to do all I could to further anything in the way of a romance, and as soon as Godfrey was sufficiently recovered to bear the idea of a visitor, suggested to him that we should ask Ella to come and stay with us. I wrote the letter of invitation with a light heart, regretting only that Stan, who had not seen her now for some time, did not look more wasted in consequence of the separation, hoping that Ella would impart a more sentimental character to the situation, and little dreaming that it was I myself who was to be the means of bringing into it an element of tragedy. Stanhope, as I have said, was not the least wasted or haggard-looking, nor was he depressed or absent-minded, nor did he care to walk by himself in the moonlight; all of which, I felt, he ought to have been or done. He seemed, on the contrary, quite contented; and on the fine moonlight evenings, of which we had a series before Ella's arrival, when Godfrey and the leading article were motionless in an armchair, and Bertram and Ellis absorbed in Fox and Geese, he seemed far from desiring solitude, quite indisposed to step out of the long open window and walk in the wonderful mixture of daylight and moonlight to which the young summer invited him, unless I went too. Then, to be sure, he would go willingly enough, and would have stayed outside longer than I dared to do, for I knew that if Godfrey were to wake up and find me absent, nothing would persuade him that I had not caught a chill; but solitary meditation had apparently no charms for this unsatisfactory lover. At first, during these evening paces to and fro, I led the conversation to the merits of Ella; but by and by I

fancied that he did not care to speak of her, and began to hope with a secret joy that his heart was too full for words. This hope was borne out by the fact that about this time he began to fall into fits of silence, and spoke, when he did speak, of the irony of fate, of the misery of existence, of the pain of beholding happiness and knowing that it could never be attained. I could not understand why he should not attain to the happiness he beheld, unless he had some reason, unknown to me, for believing that Ella's affections were given to a rival; but I thought his present attitude much more interesting than the one which had preceded it, and encouraged him to be miserable, agreeing with him as to the suffering of a hopeless love, and showing my sympathy by every means in my power.

At last the day came for Ella's arrival. I awoke quite early in the morning, I remember, wondering if she felt very much excited about coming, and if there really were any mysterious reason why she and Stan should be separated; hoping that there might be, that it might be removed, and that I might have a part, if only as a witness, in the joy and excitement of the removal. I became so wide awake picturing scenes of despair followed by rapture, that I found myself quite unable to stay in bed, and soon after six o'clock I got up, dressed hastily—very, very quietly, for fear of disturbing Godfrey—and stole out into the garden. How glorious it was! The day was full-grown, yet sweet with the freshness of morning; not hot yet, but softly warm. I have always thought June the best of the months, partly because the days of it are so long, and the nights hardly nights at all, but rather spaces of twilight across which to-morrow seems to touch yesterday; and this morning the world, as I looked on it from the garden, was to me as a dream of beauty. The dream at first was peaceful, unpeopled, and silent, save for the song of birds and the hum of insects, already in the heyday of their little life. But I had not been very long pacing my favourite grass walk between the hedges when I heard a footstep on the gravel close at hand, and round the angle of

the close-cut green came Stan Lillingworth. His face was all aglow, his brown eyes shining.

'I saw you from my window,' he said, 'and could not help coming out to join you. You don't mind?'

'Of course not,' I answered, though, to tell the truth, much as I enjoyed his companionship, I would rather have been alone just then; I had a fancy to stay longer in that dream world, empty of my kind, which I could people as I would, and once a fellow-mortal stood beside me, the spell was broken. But I did not want him to guess anything of this, so I made my manner as cordial as possible.

'Did you ever see such a morning?' said I.

'Many,' he answered, 'as fine as this, and yet none quite the same. The circumstances that—the surroundings—the——' He broke off and looked at me with a strange sort of ardour in his eyes.

I was pleased that the prospect of Ella's coming should so move him, and did my best to encourage him. 'Yes,' I said gently. 'I know. I quite understand what you mean, and—and enter into it.'

'You do? You—oh——' He reddened and paled, then added in a low voice: 'You have guessed my secret, then?'

I could not help smiling. 'I don't know that it was so very hard to guess.'

'And yet I thought—I meant—— But in spite of myself, it seems——'

I finished the sentence for him. 'In spite of yourself, you have betrayed yourself.' His look was so odd that I hastened to reassure him: 'But you need not mind, you need not be upset. I am quite sure that nobody suspects it except myself.'

'Nobody but you?'

'No; you see nobody but me would be likely to guess it.'

'Not so likely, perhaps,' Stan said meditatively. 'But you are quite sure that—your husband——'

At this I laughed outright. 'Oh, Godfrey would never

think, never dream of anything of the kind.' I thought it better not to add that Godfrey would not be the least interested.

Stanhope looked somewhat surprised at my laughter; I supposed that he thought it out of keeping with the situation, and instantly became grave again.

'I am so glad to have had this little talk,' I said, 'and I hope you will remember that whatever happens, I am always your friend.'

'Friendship?' he exclaimed. 'What is friendship?'

I was rather affronted at this speech and the manner of it, and inclined for the moment to give a sharp answer; here had I been doing my best to be sympathetic, and my sympathy apparently was counted of no value; it really was mortifying. But the next instant I reflected that I must make allowances; he was no doubt nervous and upset at the prospect of seeing Ella, and after all, if what he wanted was the love of one woman, the friendship of another did seem rather a poor thing. So I restrained my hasty answer.

'It is not much, I know,' I said humbly, 'but it is all I can give you. Perhaps, by and by, brighter days may come.'

Stanhope shook his head. 'People never die when you want them to,' said he.

I could not discern the meaning of this remark, but assumed that it referred to the mysterious barrier between him and Ella.

'I suppose the course of true love never does run quite smooth,' I said. 'And now'—I was afraid this sounded a little abrupt, but I really could not stay talking any longer—'and now I must go to Arnold; it is his bath-time, and I always like to be there.'

'Oh, don't let *me* detain you,' said Stanhope, with an air which I thought unnecessarily dignified. Still I would not resent it, and it was not difficult to bear with the humours of any one so delightfully in love as Stanhope had proved himself to be.

'I shall be quite busy to-day,' I remarked cheerfully, as we went towards the house. 'All the flowers must be done afresh, and oh, lots of things to prepare for Ella's arrival.'

'Ella?' said my companion vaguely, 'Ella?'

'Yes, Ella,' I repeated, a trifle impatiently, for he was really becoming too tiresome. 'Unless,' I added, with a demure maliciousness, 'you prefer to speak of her as Miss Craven.'

'I always speak of her as Miss Craven,' he returned.

This time I felt completely snubbed, and vexed moreover; it was so absurd, when he had just given me his full confidence, to pull me up because I made a reference to the subject of that confidence, and such a discreet reference too. I had merely spoken of Ella's arrival; anybody might have done that; and I said to myself that Stanhope, making all allowance for his lovesick condition, was inexcusably badly mannered. I was distinctly ruffled, and left him for the nursery without another word. How much nicer Arnold was than Stanhope, I thought, when I got there, as the child cooed with delight at seeing me, and kicked and jumped in his bath, and splashed me all over.

'If *you* were in love, my darling, you wouldn't be so unreasonable and unkind, would you?' But at this moment nurse took him out of the water, and he answered me with a yell.



## CHAPTER XXIV

*'Une bonne intention est une échelle trop courte.'*

I HARDLY know how to write about the next ten days: it seemed to me that I had got into a bad dream, and did not know how to wake myself up. I was thoroughly disconcerted; I had planned and looked forward to Ella's visit in the intention of bringing two lovers happily together; and, from the time that visit began, everything seemed to go wrong. Stanhope, instead of being discreetly, but to my enlightened vision, obviously adoring, was stiff, apparently uncomfortable, and unmistakably distant; and Ella, though she arrived in great spirits, though she seemed delighted to see me, and to be at Camp Holt again, and was at first gay and pleased and like her old self, changed gradually after the first evening, and became more and more subdued and silent. I could not understand it. There might be a barrier between them, but that was no reason for not making the most of the time that Fate, using me as her instrument, was giving them together. And if the barrier were of so terrible a nature that they could not enjoy one another's society, why had Stanhope appeared so pleased when I had first talked of inviting Ella to Camp Holt? and why had Ella accepted the invitation with gushing and grateful alacrity? At first I tried to take my stepsons off Stanhope's hands as far as possible, so as to leave him free to be with Ella. I could venture to be more with the boys now, for Bertram, persistently discouraged by me in his attentions and with his time filled up for him by Stanhope, was becoming less obtrusive in his devotion, and I felt that the

crisis was past. I dared, therefore, to give him more of my company ; but I soon found that my efforts in that direction were of no use to those I sought to benefit. Stanhope persisted in a more vigorous attention to his duties than before Ella's arrival, and as there was no use in both of us giving up our time to looking after my stepsons, I left him to attend to them alone. I had planned, too, that Stanhope and Ella should stroll out in the moonlight together after dinner, while I played Patience with the boys ; but Stanhope, in spite of all my hints and suggestions, persisted in looking on at the game ; and Ella, after lingering awhile by the open window, would retreat to the sofa with a book and pass the evening in what I could not but feel to be a very dull fashion. All this was most uncomfortable and bitterly disappointing ; I felt quite depressed after it had gone on for a day or two, and what distressed me most was the change in Ella's manner towards myself. I could not say that she was disagreeable, but she seemed embarrassed and ill at ease ; the old atmosphere of affectionate intimacy disappeared ; and there could be no doubt that she tried to avoid me. Generally she was rather silent and formal, but I remember that one morning when we were sitting in the garden together, she spoke with a sudden vehemence which surprised me. I cannot quite remember what gave rise to her outburst, but I think I had been speaking of my old dancing-days, and had said that I wondered if I should ever go to a ball again.

'I don't see why you shouldn't,' Ella exclaimed. 'Married women do everything nowadays, just as if they were girls, dance and flirt, just as if marriage made no difference. I think it's horrid ; and for a married woman to try and attract young unmarried men, and draw them away from other people—well, I call it despicable.'

Her sudden outburst took me aback ; but, at the same time, I was interested in what she said. 'But do they, Ella ?' I said. 'I never noticed it when I used to go about with father, and that is not so very long ago.'

'Oh, you,' answered Ella, and she spoke quite bitterly, '*you*

were always able to hold your own, no doubt. Some women are born to make fools of men.'

'Fools of men?' I gasped. 'It sounds almost as if—from the way you speak—as if you meant *me*; and yet, you know, how could I? I never go anywhere, or see any men; I couldn't, if I wanted to ever so much.'

'There is no occasion to put on the cap if it does not fit,' replied Ella. 'I said *some women*.'

'Yes, but the way you said it——'

'I was not aware that I spoke in any particular way. You know best whether you have—have done any of these things.'

'I have not,' said I, with indignant denial. 'Though I must say,' I went on in a meeker tone, 'that if I had had the chance of going to a ball, I might have gone; and—and danced, too. For I don't see any harm in it.'

'Oh, not in the *dancing*,' said Ella.

'Well, you *know* I would not flirt; I should consider it very wrong now I am married, and—and undignified.'

'I dare say. I have heard lots of women say that. But they let themselves be adored, as they would put it.'

'No man would dare to take such a liberty with *me*,' said I, sitting bolt upright, 'nor with any woman, unless she gave him a great deal of encouragement.'

Ella turned in her chair and looked me full in the face; her eyes, those very blue eyes, were as round as on that afternoon when she had first come to Camp Holt, and had fixed them upon me as we sat by the fire after tea. She stared at me silently for a few seconds, then rose, and said, very abruptly, that she was going for a walk. I did not dare to offer to go with her.

As I sat on alone in the garden, and thought of all she had said, my vexation subsided, and I felt only very, very sorry for her. For it seemed to me that I had discovered something of what was wrong. It was not Stanhope who had a rival in Ella's affection, but Ella who had one in Stanhope's; and Ella's rival—it seemed terrible to admit the possibility—was

a married woman. I could not have believed such a thing of Stan ; he was so unlike my conception of a man of loose morals or imaginings ; but the more I reflected, the more certain I became that I had hit upon the truth. I remembered his railings against fate, his sighs after a hopeless happiness, his dark allusion to the fact that only the death of a third person could bring him joy ; and I became more and more thoroughly convinced that the confidential outpourings I had so sympathetically encouraged had reference, not to Ella, but to a woman whom he had no right to love. And what a wicked woman she must be ! I was inflamed with indignation against her ; woman-like, I blamed the woman for the faithlessness of the man ; and with the severe judgment, the limited experience of youth, I pictured her as a wicked Circe, deliberately luring Stanhope into sin. The only thing I could not understand was that, when he had first arrived, he had certainly spoken of Ella as if he were very desirous of seeing her ; but that might have been only an attempt to hoodwink me, an attempt, I reflected with melancholy mortification, which had entirely succeeded ; or, perhaps, an effort to break away, in fresh surroundings, from an influence which had gradually reasserted its power over him. When I went in to luncheon I was possessed by a passionate pity for Ella, and an indignant disdain of Stanhope.

That afternoon the three of us were to drive to a garden-party at some distance from Camp Holt ; and I remember, while I dressed, looking forward to the drive with a sort of horror. For three-quarters of an hour I should be cooped up in a carriage with a young man of whom I altogether disapproved, and forced by conventional politeness to carry on a conversation with him, a task in which I knew well enough Ella would give me no aid. But the task was not so arduous as I had feared ; Stanhope was in a loquacious mood ; he could talk well in his own way when he chose ; and this afternoon he seemed as though he were exerting himself to please and amuse us. ' If "*she*" had been here,' I said to myself

with a thrill of condemnation, 'he could not have taken more trouble.' But I was very glad, all the same, for I was saved from the necessity of having to think of something to say; all I had to do was to maintain a disapproving demeanour, and to snub him as far as good manners would allow; and I found this attitude so satisfactory that I descended at Sir Mark Pearson's front door with an invigorating sense of having done my duty. When we had said our how do you do's, Stanhope asked me, with an eagerness which I thought quite out of place, if I would take a walk round the garden with him. 'I am sure I have displeased you,' he added, 'and I want to know why.'

I did not reply to the latter part of his speech, but merely said that I could not walk with him as I saw several people I wished to speak to, and, leaving him standing alone, I passed on. I could not help being pleased, when, a few minutes later, I saw him introduced by our hostess to a stout girl in pink, and carried off to play croquet, which I knew he disliked intensely. 'For,' thought I, 'if you had only been what you ought to be, you might have retired to those shrubberies with Ella, who is looking charmingly pretty, and who does not want to play croquet any more than you do.'

But presently, as I greeted first one friend and then another, I forgot all about Stan Lillingworth and his conduct, especially as, passing from group to group, I came across Sir Reginald Creagh.

'You here?' I exclaimed.

'And why not?' was his answer.

'I don't know. I thought, somehow, you never went to parties.'

'Oh, come now, Mrs. West, I am not such a surly neighbour as all that.'

He looked so kindly and unalarming that I ventured to say: 'The misanthrope is not so misanthropic as he is painted.'

'But who says I am a misanthrope?' asked he, with a look of genuine surprise.

It was Godfrey who had said it, but I could not tell him that. 'I—I thought you said it yourself,' I answered.

'And all the time I have been imagining myself something of a philanthropist,' returned he.

'I didn't mean it in any bad sense,' I said, fearing I might have offended him. 'Only I thought you did not care for going about.'

He smiled. 'Don't look so distressed. No, I suppose I don't care for going about in the sense that some people do. But then I have a good deal to keep me at home.'

'Have you? And yet you live quite alone.'

'Won't you come and have an ice? or some tea? No? Then let us sit down here. Except,' he added, with some hesitation, 'that you ought not to be monopolised by an old fogey like me.'

'Oh,' I said impulsively, 'I would much rather talk to you than anybody else.'

'That is very kind of you,' said Sir Reginald, and sat down beside me.

I was anxious to know what he could have to keep him much at home, but did not like to ask. Whether he divined my curiosity, I cannot say, but his next words gratified it.

'Yes,' he said; 'you see I do a certain amount of writing, the kind of writing that requires a good deal of research.'

'Scientific books?'

'Not strictly, and yet in a sense scientific. I try to trace back races to their beginnings, and religions to their origins.

'Religions?' said I. 'But are there many?' For in those days I knew of no religion but Christianity, and to me everything outside it meant heathendom.

'Well, there are the religions of ancient Egypt, the religions of Persia and of China; there are Hinduism and Buddhism, to name only a few.'

'Oh, but those are heathen beliefs,' I exclaimed. 'I did not know you would call them religions.'

'They are strangely and wonderfully like our own Christianity; the same ideas, the same traditions, the same symbols.'

In Etruscan graves, ancient beyond the memory of man, you will find the cross baked into the clay vessel that is at the foot of the corpse ; and in Maya temples of Central America you will find it, and in Egyptian tombs.

‘But the Cross—I thought the Cross belonged only to Christianity.’

‘Hardly, for it is there, with the triangle and the circle, in or upon the most ancient monuments that the bosom of the earth has yet given up to the modern excavator.’

‘But what does it mean? Why did they have the Cross, those heathen peoples?’

‘It means, it can only mean—so the men who have given most time and thought to the study of such things, the comparative mythologists, will tell you—that all religions have a single root and a single basis.’

‘And do you think that?’ I asked.

‘Yes, I think it, and I am glad to think it, for the theory is one which tends to unite instead of to divide mankind, which encourages the idea of a God, loving to all beings and throughout all periods of the world’s history, and not only to one people and one age; that “God hath not,” in fact, “at any time left Himself without witness.”’

‘You call that theory—what did you call it? comparative mythology?’

‘No, I cannot say that that is the theory of comparative mythology, for the comparative mythologist would not support me in what I last said. Up to a certain point we—I and the people who think like me—and the comparative mythologists go hand in hand; up to the point, that is to say, of maintaining that all religions have one origin. There we part, for we differ absolutely as to what that origin is. The comparative mythologists say that it is human ignorance; we, that it is Divine wisdom.’

‘But how,’ I said, ‘can religion come from human ignorance?’ I spoke hurriedly, for out of the corner of my eye I saw that Stanhope had finished his game, and I was desperately afraid that he would come and interrupt my conversa-

tion with Sir Reginald before I said and heard all I wanted to hear and say.

'They say,' Sir Reginald answered, 'that all religions arose from the personification by the savage of the powers of nature; that the sun, the storm, the earthquake, of the powers and forces of which he was constantly aware, seemed to him to be gods, and that he said to himself that he must propitiate them and make them his friends. They say that out of that personification every religion has arisen, however refined and philosophic it may have become later on.'

'It seems possible,' I said, so much interested that I forgot all about Stanhope, even the fear of his approach.

'Yes, it seems possible,' Sir Reginald answered, 'until you examine the ancient literatures, the literature of China, of Persia, of India, and of Egypt, and find that the more ancient the writings, the loftier the thought. Then you must ask yourself, how did the savage out of his small brain, his brutal instincts, his ignorant mind, evolve the idea of a universal Father, a Being all-powerful and loving in His power, such as is spoken of in those ancient records.'

'But savages,' I said, 'are brutal now, surely, and worship idols and are degraded in every way.'

'And that rather bears out what I say. For though if you go amongst barbarian peoples, at first you will see nothing but the outer worship of idols, if you can manage to get into nearer touch with the people, and to win their confidence, you will find that behind the symbols of idol, fetish, or totem, there is always the same tradition, vague often and fragmentary, almost lost now, but still there, the tradition of an all-embracing presence, of a universal Father; with the idea that this tradition had been taught by a mighty teacher in the far-off past, and been handed down from generation to generation.'

'You mean, then,' said I, 'that the faith originally was pure and has become corrupted, instead of being——'

'Ah, Sir Reginald, how do you do? I have been looking for you all the afternoon and thought you must have fled



home,' said a voice, and there was Mrs. Purfleet, one of the most pronounced bores in the neighbourhood, standing with triumphant face beside us.

I rose from my seat, knowing I was to hear no more about comparative mythology that day, and strolled away to find Ella. I found her trying hard to be animated, but there was a pathetic droop about her mouth when she stopped speaking that went to my heart, and her eyes glanced repeatedly towards Stanhope, who was drinking claret cup quite alone under an elm-tree, and might so easily have come and talked to her if he had wanted to do so. Yet on the way home it was Ella who talked and Stanhope who was silent. Pride, I suppose, came to her aid, the pride that is often the woman's only shield from contempt, or, what is sometimes worse, pity, and enabled her to chatter about the party and say how much she had enjoyed herself, and how amusing Mr. This was and how handsome Mr. That. Stanhope spoke only when he was obliged, and looked, I thought, decidedly sulky and not nearly so good-looking as his wont. As for me, I talked to Ella to help her along, but I would much rather have been silent with Stanhope, for again Sir Reginald had given me something fresh to think about, and I wanted to recall what he had said. My appetite for inquiry was not keen in those days, not keen enough to set me searching on my own account; yet the longing after truth for its own sake, which later on became almost the dominant factor of my life, must have been always an inherent part of my nature, and anything which stirred it, even to faint and momentary activity, could not fail to attract me. As it happened though, my conversation of that afternoon was destined to be thrust away into the inner recesses of my memory, for my emotions about this time were called into such active play that my mind could do nothing but follow them in amazed distress.

## CHAPTER XXV

'When Passion overleaps  
The barriers set by Love.'

ELLA was to go away on the following day, and I began to feel that her departure would be a relief. Day after day I had hoped that something would occur to bring about an understanding between her and Stanhope, but my hopes had grown fainter, and after the conversation of that morning, I found no more place for them. The evening was uncomfortable, as the evenings indeed generally were. Ella's animation, maintained throughout dinner, faded afterwards in the drawing-room, and Stanhope was still disposed to be sulky. I was thankful when Burge brought in the tray of bottles and glasses, and it was possible to escape from the constraint which pervaded the atmosphere.

I said good-night to Ella by the row of shining candlesticks; but instead of turning off towards her own room, she followed me to mine.

'Annie,' she said, standing not quite close to me, but a little bit back in the shadow, 'I wanted to tell you—I think I was unjust to you this morning. I said things I had no business to say.'

'You said nothing that mattered,' I answered. 'I didn't mind a bit.'

'I believe I misjudged you; I thought something that—that——'

'Oh, what does ~~it~~ matter?' I broke in upon her faltering words. '*Please don't say anything more about it.*'

'But I must. If I wronged you, it is only fair——'

There had been a certain stiffness in her voice and manner which seemed to me to indicate that she desired no display of sympathy on my part; but now her voice broke, and looking at her reflection in the glass, I saw that her eyes were full of tears. I did not attempt to restrain myself any longer, but let the feeling in my heart overflow into words and action. I put my arms about her and stroked her hair—she had very pretty hair. 'You dear,' I said, 'you poor dear! You are unhappy, I am sure, and I cannot help you.'

'She let her head sink, lower and lower, till it rested on my shoulder, and spoke in a whisper. 'O Annie, he doesn't care any more.'

What could I say? It seemed so certain that he did not. I went on stroking her hair.

'And he did,' Ella continued presently; 'I know—I am sure he did, before——'

'Before what?'

She raised her head suddenly. 'Oh, you of all people!' she said. 'Don't speak of it! Don't ask me to speak of it. I am a worm, a miserable worm, to have broken down and to let you see.'

I hardly noticed her words at the time, nor that a certain bitterness had crept back into her tone; my one desire was to comfort her. 'He will come back to you,' I said, 'I am sure of it. This other—if anything has come in the way—it cannot last; it must be some passing madness—he is not wicked really. I feel quite sure he will come back to you.'

She looked at me with such a pathetic look in her wide blue eyes. 'And yet I know—I am not nearly so pretty—or attractive——'

I kissed the trembling lips. 'Yes, you are,' I said; 'you are as attractive and as pretty as anybody, I don't care who it may be. And by and by he will find it out. Oh, I hear Godfrey.'

Ella fled without another word, and I undressed and got into bed, possessed by an intense desire to injure and punish

the shameless and wicked woman who had come between her and Stanhope.

The next morning I noticed that Ella seemed particularly anxious to avoid anything in the way of a *tête-à-tête* with me, and guessed that she was ashamed of having shown me her trouble. I understood her feelings, for how often is one disposed to confide at night that which one would give worlds to know was still hidden the next morning! and I took care not to make the slightest reference to the little scene in my bedroom. I went to the station with her and saw her off, and we said the stupid things that people generally say when one of them is standing on a platform, and the other is sitting in a train; she promised to write and let me know how she got home, and I promised to write and tell her how Godfrey went on and when Arnold's tooth came through; and when the train had started, I could not help breathing a little sigh of relief, and she, I have no doubt, did the same.

I drove back from the station considering what attitude I should take up towards Stanhope Lillingworth. It was a difficult position. There he was settled at Camp Holt for an indefinite time; I could not avoid seeing him constantly, and in an intimate way; and all the time I was burning with indignation against him. It was of no use telling Godfrey, for Godfrey would not consider the fact of Stanhope's not being in love with Ella Craven at all a sufficient reason for sending him away, and would only think me ridiculous. I came to the conclusion that all I could do was to adopt a reserved demeanour, to indulge in no more familiar talks, and to avoid Stanhope as far as possible.

It was tea-time when I got home, and such a lovely warm June afternoon that even Godfrey was willing to have tea in the garden. So we sat together in the angle of the beech hedges, and talked of the rebuilding of certain cottages which were in a very tumble-down condition. Godfrey was an excellent landlord, and his tenants never had any just cause of complaint against him; there were no roofs out of repair, no insanitary dwellings or fever centres on the Camp

Holt property. By and by he went away to talk over plans with the agent, and I, left alone, rose and walked down the grass path towards a space of formal garden which Godfrey had allowed me to arrange after my own heart, and which was a source of great delight to me. Arnold, in the hot weather, went for his walk late, and was in his perambulator in a distant part of the park, so that I had not his dear little wriggling form and masterful ways to take up my attention. Consequently my thoughts reverted to Ella, and I sat down upon an ancient seat which I had imported, and which Godfrey thought hideous and I charming, and began to recall our conversation of the previous evening, and to wonder if she were acquainted with her rival; from certain words of hers, it seemed almost as if she were—— And then something happened which makes one of the landmarks in my life, so utterly did it upset many of my ideas and conceptions and throw my theories and beliefs into confusion, and so distinctly did it bring into view new and unwelcome possibilities. I was sitting there, wishing I could do something to help Ella and to hurt Stanhope, for I had a strong desire that he should suffer too, when a new shadow fell between me and the sundial, and there was Stanhope himself standing beside me. He was standing quite still, and looking at me with the same look which I had caught upon his face that morning early, when we, or at least I, had talked of his love for Ella. It had made me, when it met mine, uncomfortable then; it was stronger now, and made me more uncomfortable still. Instinctively I turned away my eyes. 'I never heard you come,' I said. 'You came, I suppose, by the grass path.'

He did not answer, and remembering that there were to be no more familiar conversations, and hoping he would take a hint: 'I thought you were with Bertram and Ellis,' I added; and still he did not answer. Then, surprised, I looked round again, and then at last he spoke. I do not remember it all very well, nor the order in which it all happened. I think it began by his saying that he must have an explanation, that he

must know how he had displeased me, what he had done, that he could endure no longer what he had endured the last two days. All I know is that before I had recovered from my first surprise, before I could be or look dignified, I found myself swept, as it were by a torrent—a torrent of passionate words and looks and gestures. Stanhope was on the ground beside me, covering my hands with kisses, and speaking the wildest words of love. I can see his face now; that is one thing that I remember vividly, his face as he looked at me; and I can hear as in a tangle of sound his broken, tempestuous words. His words, his face, his fierce trembling emotion, were a revelation to me, a revelation of something altogether outside my experience and my dreams; I had never seen a passionate man passionately in love, and the sight, this first time I saw it, terrified me. That was my spontaneous and chief sensation—fear; I was frightened, outraged, repelled, the womanhood in me aghast and shrinking. When I was able at all to collect myself, to realise what it meant, to call my scattered senses to my aid, I rose from my seat and tore myself free from those clasping hands. I do not know what I said, but Stanhope's face whitened as I spoke.

'But you knew,' he said, 'you told me you knew, that you had guessed, and that you felt what I felt.'

'Knew?' I cried. 'Told you——' And then in a flash I understood; I sat down again and covered my face with my hands.

Stanhope moved towards me again; I felt, though I did not hear or see, his approach. 'Don't touch me,' I shuddered; 'don't dare to come near me.' How I explained it all, what I said to him, I cannot now recall; I poured out all I had meant and felt in a stream of words, as broken and as vehement as had been the utterances of his love. When I stopped at last and glanced at him, his face was set and quite quiet, and in his eyes was a look of mortification and suffering that raises pity in me as I see it in my memory, but raised no pity then. I left him, after that one look, without another

word ; I had a dim idea that if I could get away and be quite alone, it might not seem so bad.

When I reached the house, Arnold had just come in from his walk. I heard his voice as I mounted the stairs, and went along to the nursery to say good-night. I had the feeling which sometimes comes when the mind bears a disagreeable burden, that I would put that scene of the last half hour right away into the very remotest corner of my consciousness, knowing that there would be time, heaps and heaps of time, to think of it by and by, and for the moment I would not allow myself to realise that it had ever been. So I stayed in the nursery and put on nurse's apron and bathed Arnold myself, and when at last I reached my own room, it was not very far from the time to dress for dinner. There was one thing I felt I could not do, and that was to go downstairs within an hour, meet Stan Lillingworth at dinner, and go through an ordinary evening, talking to him, as I should be bound to talk, as if nothing had happened.

I felt that before I saw him again, I must think out the situation fully and clearly and decide exactly what it was best to do. So I took off my dress and put on a dressing-gown, rang the bell for my maid, and told her to tell my husband that I had a bad headache and should dine in my room. My head did ache, though not very badly, and I soothed the voice of conscience—for I was born truthful—by arguing that since we poor women have to suffer so much uncomplainingly, surely we might be allowed the advantages of our infirmities on occasion. My message brought Godfrey, disturbed and in what I called a 'buzzing' mood, because in the like frame of mind he always reminded me of a persistent fly.

'Have you got a chill?' he asked.

'Oh no; it is only that my head aches and I don't feel up to coming down to dinner.'

'You have no fever?'

'No, not the least, thank you.'

'You look feverish; your face is quite flushed. Don't you think you had better take some quinine?'

'No, I don't think so. I shall be all right in the morning ; I only want a little quiet and rest.'

'Or a sedative powder?'

'I am sure I don't require it.'

'Let me feel your pulse.'

I tried to be patient ; I was, I think, outwardly ; but my nerves were jarred, and I had the wildest longing to snatch my hand away from Godfrey's, while, with his eyes on his hunting-watch, he counted my heart-beats through an eternal minute, and then, saying he was not sure that he had not made a mistake, entered upon another period of investigation. My pulse was a little jumpy, which was not to be wondered at, but on the whole he came to the conclusion that I was not feverish. Was I sure I did not feel sick ? If so, one of the patent lozenges——

'Not in the very least,' I broke in, and added, to make this point quite clear, that I should like some dinner sent up to me. This brought about a discussion as to what I should eat, and especially as to what I should drink. I said I would have a little chicken, and, I thought, some Apollinaris water. I seldom drank wine, and in a general way disliked it, and I hoped vaguely that Godfrey would look upon the Apollinaris as a compromise between that and my usual drink of water. But not at all ; after he had insisted that the chicken should be preceded by soup, he proposed for my consumption all the wines and spirits, as it seemed to me, in existence, beginning with port and ending with gin.

'My dear,' I said at last, 'I will have a brandy and soda.'

I have often thought of the widely different significations of those two words in conjunction, 'my dear.' They may be a prelude to the most wounding retort, or the most disagreeable home truth ; they may tingle with temper, or evidence an honest desire to control it ; and they may be amongst the very tenderest terms that love may use to love. In my then case, they meant the last effort of a harried mind to maintain its equilibrium ; and fortunately the acceptance of the brandy, backed by the sound of the dressing-bell, prevailed upon



Godfrey to retire to his dressing-room. The first thing I did when he had gone was to kick off the shawl with which he had insisted upon covering my feet ; it was 75° Fahrenheit in my room, and it was so pleasant to kick something. Then I walked about rapidly, and opened the windows as wide as they would go and put my head as far out as possible ; and then I retreated to the couch again and compelled my feet to bear the burden of the shawl till Godfrey should have paid his final visit ; and when that was over, I awaited in a somewhat smoothed-down frame of mind the arrival of my dinner.

## CHAPTER XXVI

*'Dear truth, fair settler of disputes  
And ruthless spoiler of the play  
Of man's imaginings, what lutes  
Has she not broken and cast away?'*

At last! The chicken had gone, and the soup; I had poured away the brandy and drunk the soda-water; the housemaid had 'done' the room, and I was alone and at peace. The last word must be taken in a comparative sense, for peace in anything like a positive form was far away from me. I sat myself by an open window and tried to think; and never had I found thinking so difficult. I wanted thoughts, and there were only pictures in my mind; and one pre-eminent—the picture of Stanhope on his knees before me with the unmistakable look in his eyes. I think my chief feeling, now that the first horror of surprise had somewhat subsided, was one of intense humiliation; for here was I in the very position of the woman I had so unhesitatingly condemned. No man, I had said, would dare to think of falling in love with a married woman, unless the married woman had given him distinct encouragement and had practically invited and tempted him to do so. I saw how Stanhope's mistake had arisen—that terrible, mortifying mistake; I realised that the mist of romance in which I had moved, had clouded his eyes as well as my own and led to baseless ideas and false imaginings. But what, I asked myself in trembling reproach, had led up to the game of cross purposes which he and I had been playing? Why had he turned from Ella to me? What had I done to cause his defection? Had I flirted, as Ella had

young man to him  
conscience was relieved, but my mind  
than ever. If I had done nothing, and  
deliberately determined to cease caring  
to care for me, which indeed was inconceivable  
love with one woman whom he might unconsciously  
plan to fall in love with another, cut off from him ; if deliberate design came  
it, how had the thing come about? My mind  
twisted and found no escape from its  
heart swelled with unhappiness. There were  
then, dangers in the world, forces in human nature  
I had had no inkling. I had heard of  
morality ; I had read incidentally, in books  
of crime and sin ; but it had all been to me  
far off ; I accepted the fact of the existence of  
not realise it as a vital, actual force. Terrible  
of course, in the great indefinite world, but  
beings with whom I never should come in contact  
murderer, the thief, the drunkard, the adulterer  
far away from me as another ; that I should  
a man who had fallen in love with his neighbor  
that wife myself, would have seemed as  
three hours ago as that Godfrey had been  
Godfrey's wife.

spoke ill of his neighbour ; and here was Stanhope, who had nothing outwardly to distinguish him from the respectable herd, whose blackness was in no way obtrusive, who was even, in many ways, less selfish and more kindly than his kind. If only I had distrusted him from the first, I felt I could have borne it better ; but I had liked him, talked to him with pleasure, and I could not pretend, though I wanted to do so, that he had not done his duty by the boys.

I drove these disquieting thoughts and the problems to which they gave rise away from me, and set myself to solve the more practical immediate problem of what was to be done. It would be dreadful, I felt, to go on living with Stanhope in daily intimate relations, and I could not alter those relations appreciably without Godfrey perceiving, to a certain extent, at any rate, that they were altered. And Godfrey must perceive nothing ; that was quite clear to me. Intuitively I felt that he would accuse me silently, if not openly, but probably openly, of levity and indiscretion, were I to tell him what had come to pass ; that he would assume on my part, some, at least, of the lightness of conduct which I had imputed to the unknown woman who turned out to be myself ; that distrust and jealousy would take rise within him, and that I should lose his confidence, and he his own peace. No, I could not confide in Godfrey. I thought of father ; to him I could have told it all so easily ; it would have been natural to go to him at once with my perplexity and my burdened heart. I did not know what he would have said, what he would have advised, but he would have helped me, I knew, and I longed—how I longed—for the sight of his loving face, and the touch of his comforting hand. I thought of that evening, not long after he had died, when, desiring intensely his presence, I had felt him near me, and I began to wonder if, were I to let my present longing rise to the passionate force of that other night, he would come back to me again. But Sir Reginald's words were in my ears : ' Do nothing to bind to the earth the spirit whose rest and progress depend on the loosing of the ties

but the whole of those short midsummer  
ghost of it, at least, haunts them ; it is  
shy summer stars were showing dimly.  
silence, listening to the inarticulate breath  
heard a faint sound below, and looking  
darkness, saw a shadowy form that pressed  
forwards on the lawn. It was Stanhope  
was to draw back from the window.  
realised that he could not see me, and  
him. Somehow, as I watched him, the in  
the almost disgust which had been strong  
him faded for a space, and I seemed to see  
and wretched, wandering alone in the rain  
had made for him. The feeling did not  
morrow's daylight brought back with it again  
but for a little while a sort of pity still  
seemed to discern, dimly, brokenly, as through  
and through a veiling mist, some faint, in  
the feeling that must have been in the  
when, looking upon the sin of the world,  
nor condemned, but yearned towards the  
Himself even to the death. Just for  
through a glass and very darkly, the vapour  
me then --

the library for a quarter of an hour or so, Godfrey came to me with a flustered face, and said that people were really very inconsiderate.

I inquired what was the matter.

'Here is Stanhope,' he answered, 'saying he must go away, that his father wants him back, and he feels he must go as soon as possible!'

My heart lightened; I could have cried aloud with relief; but I tried hard to look downcast. 'It seems sudden,' I said, 'and we had got used to having him here. But you are so much better, and Bertram and Ellis have settled down so quietly now, that I don't know that—that——'

'But he manages them so well.'

'Yes, and we shall miss him of course. Still——'

'I thought he was such a comfort to *you*,' said Godfrey, 'and you don't seem as if you minded.'

'He could not stay here always, you know,' I answered; 'and it is perhaps better he should go before we get to depend on him too much.'

'And yet I don't see why he shouldn't—and he certainly has been a great comfort in many ways. Still there is the business, and one can understand his father—— Would you like to have somebody else?' Godfrey ended suddenly.

'Oh no,' said I quickly, 'oh no, thank you.' I thought there were worse things than my stepsons and their vagaries.

So Stanhope went away. Before he went, he contrived to have a few minutes' conversation alone with me.

'I want to tell you,' he said, 'that I am sorry; sorry I upset you.'

'Would it not be better——?' I began.

'No, I have something to say, and you must let me say it. I insulted you, and I hate myself for doing it, but——'

'That was partly my fault,' I broke in, 'for—for—quite unconsciously—for not seeing that we were at cross purposes.' And I blushed to think of all I had said to him under the impression that he was talking of Ella.

she you really care for; the—the  
pass.'

He shook his head. 'Never. No  
life!' He went away after those  
shocked and distressed anew, for I  
believe him.

## CHAPTER XXVII

'For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,  
And hope and fear . . .  
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love.'

I MUST take a leap now across five years, or bridge them over, rather, with a slender record of events. They were calm for the most part, those years, in outward seeming, at any rate; incidents were few, as the fortune-teller had said, and yet, as she had also said, things happened to me; things for the most part intangible; processes of thought, the shaping of new ideas, the asking of questions. I think the world was never quite the same to me after that visit of Stanhope Lillingworth's. He went away, and the calm monotony of daily existence seemed to flow over and disperse the swirl of emotion which he had caused in its even current: sometimes it seemed to me as if it could hardly have happened, that scene in the garden, and I tried to take up my old position and my old outlook. But Eve had taken her first bite of the apple; something of the knowledge of good and evil was mine for evermore, and within the boundaries of my mental vision were problems which hitherto had had for me no existence. Yet it was not, I think, till Arnold became old enough to ask questions, that the questioning element in my own nature became positively active. It is strange at how early an age children will attack problems which maturity evades; it is as though they begin life with the contemplation of the big issues, and that it is life itself which casts those issues into the background, covering them with little ambitions and superficial needs. It seems to



...and milk because, I  
it.

'But that is very naughty, M  
remonstrated.

'Then I'd rather be naughty;  
language of his own which defies a

'But if you're not good, God wo

'Yes, He will. I know Him,' A.

'O Master Arnold, however ca  
Don't you know that God lives in h

But Arnold was nothing daunted.  
he said, quite gravely. 'I was there

'O Master Arnold,' nurse began  
her. Through all my life dim mem  
hood have never been quite wiped c  
now, with their vague impression of  
of the nursery, and visions other th  
things about me; and Arnold had  
while in the material world. 'Neve  
'perhaps he knows more than we  
know which of us shocked her the  
son.

But it was when I began to try  
that I involved myself

in face of those clear, inquiring eyes, seemed to me impossible, illogical, or grotesque.

'Does God want everybody to be good?' Arnold asked, always in that lisping language of his own which was music to me.

'Yes.'

'Then why did He make any bad people?'

'He didn't *make* them bad,' I explained. 'They were disobedient and then they—they fell.'

'Fell down?' This with very big eyes, for only shortly before, being forbidden to mount a flight of steps, he had mounted them nevertheless, and fallen on bare, tender shins.

'No, they fell into sin—that means they became naughty.'

'And wasn't it naughty to be disobedient?'

'Yes, of course, but——' Exposition failed me, and Arnold never allowed time for reflection.

'Then they was naughty to begin with, and so God did make them bad.' And I could only change the subject by suggesting that we should play horses.

Another time, when he was rather older, he startled me after I had been telling him about the Atonement by the statement that he did not think it very good of Jesus to die. 'Galileo died too, that you read me about,' said Arnold, 'because he would not say the earth stood still.'

'But Jesus died to save the world,' I said.

'I should think it was easier to die to save it than because of it standing still or going on,' was Arnold's answer.

'And then He was God,' I hastened to add, 'not just a man, and He came down from heaven on purpose.'

'Perhaps He liked heaven best and wanted to get back quick,' replied this irrepressible little disputant, and I closed the discussion, not knowing in what difficulties he might contrive to land me.

After that I eschewed doctrine and taught Arnold only the ethical precepts laid down by Christ; or rather, what

seemed to me the general meaning of those precepts ; for so literal was he in interpretation, that I found I had to be careful in what I read to him. And all the time, though I did not know it, he himself, the little child I was trying to teach, was my real God, the centre to which my heart turned with its deepest affection and my mind with its chief energies. Had I been told that such was the case, I should no doubt have been as greatly disquieted as I was by Arnold's theology : nevertheless in that unconscious worship I learned some lessons—of the strength and force of love ; I made some progress—in self-sacrifice and unselfishness ; for even on the lower levels, true worship—which is but love in contemplation—must be in itself ennobling, and it is better ardently to adore an idol than indifferently to profess allegiance to the Highest.

During those five years, as I have said, there seemed but few events, and yet they wrought changes, not the less important that they were slow. The chief of these changes was the deterioration in my husband's health. Very gradually it happened, so gradually that I think I did not realise what was taking place till the chronic character of his illness was undeniably established. And then, at last, there was no hiding from the fact ; he was a helpless invalid, and must remain so all his life. Crippled always, suffering much at times, he was transformed from the rather masterful, dominating, active man I had married, into a being dependent, querulous, irritable often from the rheumatism which disabled his limbs and racked his nerves ; impatient in little things, yet maintaining a certain fortitude ; demanding much of my strength and time, appealing altogether to my tenderness and pity. Kind he had always been, and now he clung to me, depended on me, lived to a great extent upon the interest and companionship I was able to contribute to his existence : and I remembered the kindness, remembered how much he had done for father in his need, and was able to give him what he asked. I do not say that it was always easy ; I was young, and just an ordinary human being, with nothing

specially heroic about me, and with all the desires of humanity and youth for pleasure and enjoyment, sunshine, society, and laughter. Often the selfish side of me rebelled against the long hours in the close room—for Godfrey was more than ever afraid of chills—while outside the sun was shining and the summer calling; or while in the winter loneliness the frost king reigned, and I knew that on the lake in a neighbouring park the skaters were assembled and a merry company was gathered in a sheltered spot for lunch. But always, thank God, the pity in me and the gratitude triumphed in the end, so that I never came to the pitch of a brooding or confirmed discontent. And then I had always Arnold; in the beginning, when in some ways it was the hardest to bear, and through the greater part of those years of nursing, there was always Arnold. Perhaps that was why I loved him so supremely, so ineffably: because he was my all.

I think, amidst the changes that time certainly if imperceptibly effected, of all the things and the people about me, it was my stepsons who changed least. The years seemed to bring them no nearer to maturity; the 'improvement' which in the first days of my married life, Godfrey had so sincerely, and I so ardently hoped for, never came; they were still just overgrown boys, content to live from meal to meal, with the dogs and a walk, and that 'collection' of Ellis's which embodied the tastes on which I had built so much, to fill up the intervals; and in the evenings still Fox and Geese and the illustrated papers, and a game with me as the crown of amusements. Only in one direction was there a change, or rather a reversion: Bertram, to my intense thankfulness and relief, returned to his original attitude towards me, and I was able to take up my old ways with him without fear or disturbance. And happily, with the disappearance of his unfortunate attack of devotion, disappeared also his jealousy of Arnold. The big, uncouth half-brothers developed bit by bit a firm attachment to the little brother who, while yet in petticoats, outstripped them in intelligence; I think they looked upon him, when he was still so young, as something

midway between a dog and a human being, and as combining many of the merits of both. At first I was afraid to trust him alone with them, fearing Ellis's sly malice and Bertram's roughness, but Arnold, taking their goodness for granted, teased and tyrannised with such perfect impunity that by and by I ceased to have any fears.

I had not much companionship during those first six years of Arnold's life. The ordinary country intercourse with our neighbours dwindled to occasional formal calls, as Godfrey claimed more and more of my time; and he did not care to have visitors staying in the house. Cordelia came once for a day or two, and represented to me that my lot, though it had its thorns, possessed still many of the attributes of the rose. 'You must put Godfrey's income against his decrepitude,' she said, 'and be thankful for what God has given you'; and pointed out that as it was probable I should become a widow while yet young, an ample jointure in a possibly near future was of much greater moment than a fleeting enjoyment in the present. Somehow I had never felt so fond of Godfrey as when Cordelia enumerated what she called his deficiencies, or so anxious that his life should be prolonged as when she balanced those deficiencies against the advantages of his death; and I shocked her by declaring in one of the little gusts of fury she had the faculty of arousing in me, that I did not care to speculate upon the cut and fit of dead men's shoes. Cordelia was very dignified after that, and when she came to see me again, it was only for the day.

Then once or twice there was a flying visit from Judy, vehement as ever, and as eager to take up the cudgels for the weak or wicked; but she never argued with Godfrey now, or contradicted him. 'He has passed into the ranks of the defenceless,' she said, 'and so must be humoured and soothed. However much you may disagree with or disapprove of people, or however much they may disapprove of you, as soon as they are unhappy, nothing can be thought of but comfort—or an attempt at it.' So she was quite gentle and not the

least combative in Godfrey's presence, and he said he thought she had improved and was toning down.

Of Ella Craven, during the first two years after that miserable failure of a visit, I saw nothing, and heard but little; occasional short, stiff letters replaced the active correspondence which had previously kept me in touch with her, and I said to myself that I had lost a friend. Then, gradually, the letters increased in frequency and length; instead of barren phrases, there were glimpses of her thoughts and feelings, her actual life; and at last an allusion, casually thrown in, to Stan Lillingworth. When I answered the letter in which it occurred, I made no reference to this allusion, and soon there came a further mention of him, and later still another. I gathered she was meeting him fairly often in London, and the meetings seemed to become more frequent, for soon his name figured in every letter. It was, 'Mr. Lillingworth saw me home,' or, 'I came across Mr. Lillingworth,' or, 'Mr. Lillingworth said the other night.' I began to wonder and to hope, and was barely surprised, though glad as I had never, I think, been glad in my life before, when a culminating letter came, ecstatic, disjointed, and ungrammatical, telling me that she was the happiest, the most fortunate, the best beloved girl in the world. The cause of all this, of course, was Stanhope. 'He always cared for me,' Ella wrote. 'There was a time—you will remember it—when he doubted, did not feel sure of himself, and was not sure that we should suit each other. I don't mind telling you now, dear, that I thought he was falling in love with you, and I was mortally, fiendishly jealous of you for a time, and thought all sorts of abominable things about you, and was horrid to you, I know. And he *did* admire you, he admits it, and says his fancy was worked upon by what he calls your attractiveness, and I know you are very attractive, and much, much prettier than I. But you never gave him the smallest encouragement, and all the time he really liked me. A man generally has many fancies, he says, but I am the love of his life.' I remembered the phrase—that last one—for Stanhope had

used it to me ; and I remembered his face, wild and passionate, as he clung to my hands in the garden, and his miserable voice saying that he could never forget. I was more than glad to think that tragedy had bent itself to so joyous a transformation ; but puzzled too, for this also was outside my conceptions of romance. Later on I came to see that to a vast number of people the present phase of experience and emotion appears always the chief one of their existence, dimming the past and dwarfing the future, as this present life appears a separate whole and not merely a link in a chain ; and that only to the few are memory and anticipation indestructible in that consciousness which is a recognition of eternity.

Of Sir Reginald Creagh I saw very little during those six years, partly because it was difficult to see anybody, and partly because during the course of them he was much away from home. At long intervals the old gray horse brought him over to Camp Holt, and he spent with me the tea-hour that I had made my own ; and once—it was in the last of those years—I paid a visit to Berkstone. I was out driving, for one of the things Godfrey insisted upon was that I should take the horses out every day ; and I came upon Sir Reginald close to his own gate. He said that I must not pass his house without going in, and I was glad to accept his invitation, grateful, as I always was, for his friendliness. I could go straight back, I reflected, without taking the round by Winstead Heath as I had meant to do, and so would not be late in reaching home. It was a dark autumn day, and the leaves lay thick and yellow under the trees on either side of the drive. It was pleasant to turn out of the gray atmosphere into the cosy warmth of Sir Reginald's sitting-room, and it was pleasant when, in a few minutes, his manservant brought in two fragrant cups of coffee, made Turkish fashion, and some little quaint, enticing cakes.

'It is too early for tea,' Sir Reginald said, 'but it is never too early—or too late—for coffee.'

I answered with a little pleased laugh, and drew my chair

close to the table and ate and sipped—for the coffee was very hot—with much enjoyment. I had been feeling rather moped and dreary, and now the little change of scene and the kindly face and ways of my old friend seemed to have lifted me into another world, and I chatted gaily. And all the time I talked, my eyes turned—in spite of myself, for I tried to look away—to that picture over the mantelpiece which had struck me so on my first visit; the woman's portrait with the dominating face, and the piercing, protruding eyes. I longed to ask who she was, and what she had done; but I did not dare; there had been a shade in Sir Reginald's manner when, on that other occasion, I had ventured upon an inquiry, which I had not forgotten, and which seemed to forbid questioning. But the direction of my eyes could not fail to inform him of what was in my mind; and at last, as I rose to go, he answered my unspoken thoughts.

'You want to know who she is,' he said, 'the original of that picture?'

'Yes,' I answered; 'and if she is alive still, and what she has done—something, I am sure, that has made a mark upon the world.'

He named a name which was hardly known to me at that time, which had barely reached the backwater of life in which I then was moored, but which soon was to set both East and West ablaze with scorn and anger and contempt; a name which has been covered with contumely and enshrined in reverence, which is loved and hated, exalted and abased.

'I don't know,' I said, 'anything about her; but I wish—I should like immensely to see her.'

'If you are ever in London,' Sir Reginald answered, 'when she and I are both there, you shall have your wish.'



## CHAPTER XXVIII

*'L'homme le plus simple qui a de la passion persuade mieux que le plus éloquent qui n'en a point.'*

I SMILED and shook my head when Sir Reginald spoke of my being in London; such a thing seemed the remotest of remote contingencies; and yet, within six months, the seemingly impossible had come to pass.

In the beginning of the following year a conclave of doctors was held at Camp Holt. Two eminent specialists came down from London; and, in concert with the local practitioner and a physician from the neighbouring town, visited Godfrey in his room, then descended in a body and talked together for half an hour in the library. The result of their deliberations was a strongly expressed opinion that my husband should pass two or three months in London under the direct supervision of Sir Basil Montague, one of the consultants, and should undergo a certain treatment which had proved beneficial in several cases of chronic rheumatism. Godfrey did not like the idea of a journey, nor of moving from the comfortable surroundings to which he was used, to others untried and strange; but the earnest recommendation of the doctors, and the chance, though a slender one, of an improved condition of health, outweighed his dislike of the change, and it was decided that we should go to London in March. I remember the day when it was finally settled, a dark January day, with constant little spitting showers of rain; and that, as I sat in Godfrey's sitting-room with the newspaper on my knee, prepared to read the leading article whenever he should ask for it, I could hardly prevent myself

from getting up and dancing for joy. It was not till the cage door opened a little way that I knew how cramping the bars had been, not till the prospect of mixing a little with my kind was within my vision, that I dared to admit how solitary my life had become. When the leading article was finished, I rushed along to the nursery, thrust Arnold into a warm coat, covered myself with a shawl, and then, hand in hand, we ran, in the almost darkness, the whole length of the drive. At the further end, I stopped to get my breath, and Arnold said: 'Mother, is there a giant after us?'

'No,' I answered, 'but a fairy has waved a magic wand, and we are going, you and I and father, into a new world; we are going to London.'

'What lives in London?' Arnold asked.

'Bears and lions,' I said, 'and hansom cabs, and streets, and lighted lamps, and people, and music, and toyshops.'

'Oh!' said Arnold. 'And are the bears and lions very hungry?'

'Yes, but they are fed every day, and we will go and give them buns.'

'But do they like buns as much as—as people?'

'Oh, they are in cages and can't get out.'

'But they growl?'

'Terribly; and roar. Now let us go back. I don't want you to catch cold.'

After that, every evening when Arnold came downstairs, we talked about London, and I am afraid we constructed together a veritable magic city, which could never exist on this prosaic earth. Arnold was distressed when he found that Bertram and Ellis were to remain at Camp Holt, and began to make inquiries as to who and what else was to stay behind. After having satisfied himself as to the fate of his toys and his reading-book, he inquired if God would go with us.

'But you know,' I said, 'that God is everywhere.'

'I think He might as well be nowhere,' said he.

'O Arnold! But why?'

'It's like the sky,' Arnold answered. 'That's everywhere, and you never can get any nearer or run away from it. I know, because I've tried; and I like people you can get close to or leave behind.'

'You can get closer,' I assured him, 'but only by being very good.'

'Near enough to touch Him?'

I thought of the evening when, in answer to my inarticulate cry for help, help had seemed to come, and I answered: 'Near enough to feel that He is there.'

'Some day when it's Sunday,' said Arnold, 'and I don't have on clean stockings that tickle, I'll be very good and try.'

We had taken a house in London in a street behind Park Lane. Some of its windows overlooked the Park, and there, amid the London trees, I saw the spring awake, and watched its long gray twilights, and the mystery of it merge with the commonplace. And between the Park and the house ran the busy road, with the omnibuses and cabs and the clicking hoofs of the horses. It was all very different from Camp Holt, and I felt the stimulus of it and of the surging life which barely paused at the dead of night before it rushed on anew. To most people my life in London would have seemed very dull and quiet and monotonous; and, indeed, the greater part of my time was, as at home, given to attendance upon Godfrey. With society, in the technical sense, I had nothing to do, or with gaiety and amusement, as ordinarily understood; and yet those three months in London seemed at the time, and seem to me on looking back, to bristle with interest. One of the first things I did, after we were settled, was to take Arnold to the Zoological Gardens, where we spent I am afraid to say how much money on buns and biscuits, for he wanted to feed every animal he saw, and to see every animal in the place. And we went to Madame Tussaud's together, and to the Tower and Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's; all the places which country people visit, and which Londoners constantly know

so little about. But we were thorough country bumpkins, Arnold and I, and enjoyed ourselves in true bumpkin fashion whenever I had a couple of hours free.

I had not been many days in London when I received my first visit from Ella Lillingworth. She came, fortunately, in my free hour—that is to say, between six and seven o'clock, when Godfrey was always in the hands of the man who came daily to rub his poor crippled limbs; so that I was able to see and talk to her. She was in high spirits, pleased with herself, with Stanhope, and with the year-old baby, who, she informed me, was the image of its father.

'Just Stan's intellectual brow,' she said, 'and the same faithful eyes. O Annie, do you remember the talks we used to have about love and romance, and how sentimental we both used to be?'

'Yes, and how delighted I was to have you to talk to.'

'I don't think I am so sentimental as I was. I think one has to be a little lonely or unhappy or not to quite know what one wants, to be sentimental; and marriage seems to take the sadness out of life. Don't you think so?'

'Perhaps,' said I, 'if it doesn't put more in.'

'Oh, you poor dear! What a brute I am to forget poor Godfrey and his sufferings, and all you have to put up with! How is he, Annie?'

'There is no improvement yet, but of course there wouldn't be in such a short time. And then the journey rather upset him. But he is pretty well—for him.'

'Your lot is certainly very different from mine,' said Ella, looking at me with that fixed, contemplative gaze of hers. 'And those stepsons! How are they? Is Bertram's beard——'

'It is fuller, but otherwise much the same.'

'And do they enjoy their meals as much as ever?'

'They haven't much else to enjoy, you see,' I said.

'That's true,' said Ella, contemplative again. 'It must be terrible to be without the normal amount of brains. Now Stan——' And then I heard all his perfections over again.

'I don't know, exactly, but she had gone wrong——'

'Exactly,' Judy broke in, 'gone wrong, or been led wrong, or carried away, a victim to her own weakness, or her own heart, perhaps, where another woman, no worse, but with a colder nature, would have kept her head.'

'A colder nature,' I ventured to put in, 'or possibly a stronger one, or perhaps a purer.'

'Oh yes, I know; I know, of course, that it is better to be strong, with the strength that can stand temptation and the purity that can rise above it. But the strong and the great and the noble need no aid; *they* can fight life's battles alone. It is the weak—and the wicked, if you will—who want help; help not from great saints or preachers, but from the ordinary person like you and me, the person who has the power to call on them or cut them.'

'But,' I said meekly, 'you can't always do those things. In my case, for instance, Godfrey——'

'Oh, Godfrey! Godfrey is—God help him!' she put in, in a sudden parenthesis of pity, 'he is suffering as much, in another way, as a woman whom the whole county is trying to drive to the devil, so I can't say anything against him. But put him aside as an individual and take him as a type of a—of a—of a *husband*. Nothing,' said Judy emphatically, 'can be worse than husbands, as a rule.'

'O Judy, come now,' I put in.

'No, it's perfectly true; I repeat it; the instant a man becomes a husband, he loses any sense of fairness, of chivalry, of pity he ever may have possessed.' She was walking up and down the room now, in a way she had when the hobby she was riding took to galloping speed. When I think of her, I always see her thus, walking up and down in the twilight, in and out the space where the firelight played, her hands behind her back. 'A man will lead what is called a man's life; he will ruin or deceive women, or, without deceiving them, will help to drag them down to degradation, go hand in hand with them for a bit along the downward path. But many men, until they marry, have some sense of fair play;

they recognise that the women on the wrong side of the line have many virtues, may have all except the one; they recognise that in the game of illicit love, the devil, when he deals the cards, gives the man the trumps; they recognise that in the half world—or in the whole world, when intrigue comes into play—as regards relative merit between man and woman, it is at least six of one and half a dozen of the other. But as soon as a man becomes a husband, all sense of fairness goes. A woman with a speck on her reputation is all black to him; she must not touch or approach or come within appreciable distance of the woman he has chosen to marry; *she* must be kept absolutely free from taint, or contact with, or even knowledge of, what he has helped to create; and all this exclusiveness—and this is what is so despicable—not because his wife is a woman, but because that particular woman is *his* wife, belongs to him.'

'But,' I began, 'if we made no distinction, would not society——?'

Again she snatched the words from me. 'Society would become corrupt? What is it now? It is not pure; it is simply unjust; it kicks the woman who errs, and exalts the one who sins. Yes, you may fall, make one false step perhaps, and if you are nobody in particular, society will be shocked and frown you out of its circle. But if you are beautiful or prominent, or the fashion, you may go on sinning, and society will shut its eyes, or wink at most—so long as you do it discreetly. And if you are an actress in the first rank, or choose your lover high enough up, you may do what you please, and society will welcome you with open arms, will clamour to get you to its parties, and fight for a sight of you when you are there.'

'But still, even so,' I persisted, 'even if it is as bad as that, there is, somewhere at the back of it all, a feeling in the mass of people that wrong is wrong and ought to be treated differently from right. They may not discriminate, and they may often be uncharitable, but still there is something about it that—that—that has a sound foundation at least.'

'The foundation of it,' Judy answered, with no diminution of vehemence, 'is the worship of respectability, a worship which is the curse of the English race.' Suddenly she stopped in her walking and her speech, and came and sat down beside me. 'I know what you mean,' she said in a different tone, 'though you don't put it at all well; and there is some truth in it. There is, or there was, rather, somewhere at the bottom of the thing, an honest dislike of vice and sin, an honest desire to discourage their growth and practice. But cant has grown over it all, the cant of morality, and sucked the life out of it as ivy sucks the life out of a tree; and every year the ivy is more vigorous and the tree feebler.'

'I wonder,' I said, as she sat silent, her animation sunk in pensiveness, 'I wonder what makes you feel so strongly about it. There may be other people who do, but I have never known any to whom it seemed really to matter—as it does to you.'

'I don't know,' she answered slowly; 'it was born in me somehow, I suppose. Ever since I began to think at all, and I began pretty early, my whole consciousness has been a protest against things as they are. And then'—her utterance quickened again—'I believe most people go through life only half alive; that is to say, they are interested in things which actually touch them, which affect themselves or their belongings; but otherwise they see nothing, not even the things which are under their very noses. And by seeing, I mean seeing, knowing, feeling, anything to be a reality. If their own son has to fly the country, or their own daughter is divorced, they realise that the things which lead up to these disasters exist; but you may talk to them of misery and evil, they may read of them in newspapers and know them to be what they call facts, and yet they no more know them really, they no more *feel* them, than that cat knows and feels the hunger of the homeless cats in the squares who are not daily supplied with milk.'

'Judy,' I said hesitatingly, 'I'm afraid I am rather like that. I don't feel acutely the wrongs of—of the world at large.'

'No, I know, but that's only because you are so absurdly undeveloped. But it's there; you have it in you to feel passionately, which is the only real way of feeling.'

'But——'

'Oh, I know what you are going to say, that passion is distorting and blinding and a thing to be suppressed or fought against.' She began to parade the room again. 'It is one of the most false and provoking heresies that were ever evolved by the cold-blooded and the—the—the backboneless. Prejudice! oh yes, you may be full of it, and very often the most prejudiced people are the least sensitive—I don't mean in vanity, but in sympathy. But passion! Oh no. And yet'—Judy stopped in her walk, and taking her hands from behind her back, spread them out towards me—'what is religion, what is philanthropy, what is love without it? The first is indifference, the second is priggishness, the third is—the third is moonshine.'

'But I always thought,' I ventured to say, 'and poets say it, some at least, and saints, that the highest love is purified from passion.'

'Yes, and by it. My dear, you go too fast; you take the standard of heaven, whereas we are on the earth, climbing, by a vast ladder; and passion is one of the rungs. Only by going through it can you get above it. The people below it, without it, are—are—slugs. Is there no passion in your love for Arnold?'

'Oh yes,' I said quickly, 'oh yes. But I thought you meant the love between man and woman.'

'It's all the same; though of course it isn't; there's a difference; but it's the same in principle. Take it at that, then, the love between a man and a woman, and I maintain still that love without passion is—is'—and Judy suddenly descended to a seat and a homely metaphor—'is like a cup of tea when the water isn't boiling. You get something, but it isn't tea; to get real tea the water *must* boil or ~~must have~~ boiled.'

'But even if it has boiled,' I said, to tease her, 'it gets



stewed and horrid unless you drink it off at once and have done with it.'

'Only if you leave the leaves in,' she returned, 'the leaves of selfishness. Strain it off and you can keep it for hours—which in the existence of tea is a lifetime. And now, good-bye, Mavourneen'—often her name for me.

'Judy,' I said, as we both stood up, 'I wonder—have you ever been in love?'

'Thank God I never was while my husband was alive,' she answered emphatically.

'No, I did not mean then. But even if you had been, I am sure you would have overcome it.'

'The temptation? Possibly; I can't say, for you never can tell till you are tried what you are made of. But it is the feeling, not the conduct, that matters. Adultery is in the heart—as Christ said. I am not orthodox, but I take a number of the sayings of Christ quite literally. I must go, Mavourneen.' She stood a moment looking at me. 'Even friendship,' she said, 'is not much worth without a touch of that divine thing which takes form here as passion—or devotion; it's the same thing. It may be a poor thing, as people say, a lucifer match that splutters; but the light in it comes from the sun. Good-bye again.'

And when she was gone, I realised that she had not answered my question.

## CHAPTER XXIX

'The spirit of man has two dwelling-places. . . . The border-land between them is . . . the land of dreams.'

It was while I was in London that I had my Dream. I spell it with a big D because it made such an impression upon me, and because, taken in connection with later events, it was so strange and wonderful. This was my dream. I found myself suddenly quite alone, and the word 'alone' gives no measure of the absolute loneliness I experienced. I seemed to be in a world of nothingness, or rather in a nothingness in which there was no world ; no creature, or Creator, no form or spirit, or the possibility of any existence; there was only I and a nothingness which seemed positive in its quality of non-being. I cannot attempt to describe the horror of it. It was not fear, for there was nothing to be afraid of; solitude is too narrow a word to carry the width of desolation I would express; it was dull, blank horror. I was not in darkness; it was not black about me, but gray; a gray fog, but without any thickening of the atmosphere. And here I remained, motionless; I do not know whether because I had no power to move, or because I knew that motion would have made no difference, inasmuch as it was all the same throughout, and limitless; wherever I was I should have been still the centre of that spaceless negation. I do not know how long it lasted, the blankness and the horror; but all at once it passed, or my consciousness passed from the contemplation of it, and became absorbed in that which came forth from the nothingness. A man's head and face it was, impalpable, yet firmly outlined. Quite suddenly it appeared, yet without any phase of coming; it

simply was there. I can see it now; the wide brow, bounded by dark hair, gray-tinged; the nose, long at the base; the mouth modelled sensuously, but set in curves of austerity and self-restraint; the eyes clear, penetrating, and steady, with a certain uplifted look that leaned towards triumph. As they met mine, those eyes, the sense of desolation which had held me was annihilated, and I knew only comfort, a comfort so sweet and absolute that the intensity of it woke me.

I awoke and knew that I had dreamed, yet so strong was the impression of the dream that the atmosphere of it was about me still and permeated the waking world. All that night it enveloped me, and hung round me throughout the following day. And the face haunted me, vivid, lifelike, compelling, all the day till evening; then left me. I could recall it if I would, but it did not come unbidden, and gradually the dream faded from my daily memory into that deeper consciousness which does not die.

I went to two concerts while I was in London, and was ashamed of the extent to which the music moved me. I had heard but little music in my life. As a child I had sat spell-bound while Cordelia sang 'I stood on the Bridge at Midnight,' which I thought one of the most affecting ditties that musician had ever conceived or poet penned; but music, as genius gives and art renders it, was almost unknown to me during the early part of my life. It was Judy who had opened the door into the wide world of it; and within that world stood Joachim, holding a wand he called a bow, and with the sweep of it enlarged creation. Heights I saw sometimes, and depths, and it was rarely that the music was pure pleasure, so fraught was it with a wistfulness of pain, with a striving spirit that, in its longing after complete expression, tore at the roots of being. Art of the emotions, and, like them, turbulent, subtle, delicate, and overwhelming, it appeals not to the highest in man, but to that which in each individual is strongest; the temperament answers to its touch as the needle to the magnet: so that exuberant joy is in it; and pain and laughter; and coarse passion and high endeavour; and peace

and longing and worship ; and heaven and madness and hell. But I could bear it then, at that time, and the strange regions into which I glanced through its windows, the sensations which swayed me, held pleasure to an extent which out-balanced the undercurrent of pain.

At Camp Holt I had grown to think that my nature was after all a placid one ; that the romantic, sentimental fancies which had coloured life for me were but the common heritage of youth, and would pass as youth faded ; that the stirrings of my girlhood would dwindle into a calm like that of Cordelia. But London brought them all to life again, the old dreams and the unfathomed possibilities and the heroic ideals. And not only music moved me, but people ; people whom I met sometimes on my rare visits to Judy, or faces that I passed in my walks and never saw again. And the streets stirred in me feelings I could not define ; a sort of pity I seemed to feel, though I could not tell what I pitied, and a tremor of excitement that thrilled my nerves as the waves of life beat up against me. It was at this time that I began to find meaning in much which had hitherto been meaningless ; in the outside world, in my own imaginings, and in books. I began now to read Browning with a dawn of appreciation ; and it was now that there took rise, very faintly within me, the idea of an inward life of the spirit, and the desire for truth apart from belief. Just what it was that stirred me to new interest I cannot say, but I think I partly owe my love of Browning, as well as the birth of spiritual longing, to a man I saw and observed and listened to for an hour and a half one Sunday morning. He was a preacher well known and prominent, hardly popular, since those who disliked and disapproved of him were equal to or in excess of his admirers. But he attracted great crowds to his church, and in the crowds was always a large masculine element ; for whatever he was or was not, he was both interesting and logical. I, as he read the lessons, and when he ascended the pulpit and stood, passing an ill-kept hand in and out of untidy hair, was repelled by him ; but when he began to speak, my attention was riveted by his words and

by something in the man himself, as well as in what he said, which compelled interest and an, at first, unwilling sympathy. I cannot be sure what his text was, but I think it was the words of St. Paul: 'The thing that I would, I do not, and the evil that I would not, that I do.' The substance of those words, at any rate, formed the theme of his sermon, and I remember how he spoke of the longings of the soul after the highest, of the lusting of the flesh and the craving of the mind after unworthy, degrading pleasures. I remember how I was thrilled to aspiration when he pictured the first, and quailed as he dwelt on the manifold attractions of evil; and I remember, as he spoke of the secret sins that a man wrestles with and sinks under and strives again to overcome, unsuspected by his fellow-men, unpunished save through the whip of remorse wielded by his higher self, that I thought that he himself must have looked into the depths and trod with wavering feet upon the brink of dark places. For indeed the face was a face seared with the possibilities of great evil. Ugly it was and coarse, with a power in it that might conquer, I felt, the innate tendencies it expressed or reinforce them to his own destruction. And with it all, he appealed to me as never preacher had appealed yet; straight he went to the root of things; no conventional phrases he used, no scholastic theology; as a man he spoke to the heart and the reason of men, and my reason and my heart answered him. He closed his sermon by quoting certain lines from Browning. As soon as I reached home, I looked them out in my volume of 'Selections,' which was all of the poet that I at that time possessed, and found that they were from Rabbi Ben Ezra. These are they:—

Not on the vulgar mass  
 Called 'work,' must sentence pass,  
 Things done, that took the eye and had the price;  
 O'er which, from level stand,  
 The low world laid its hand,  
 Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

But all, the world's coarse thumb  
 And finger failed to plumb,

So passed in making up the main account ;  
All instincts immature,  
All purposes unsure,  
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount :

Thoughts hardly to be packed  
Into a narrow act,  
Fancies that broke through language and escaped ;  
All I could never be,  
All, men ignored in me,  
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

I think I never read the poem—a favourite one with me now—from which those verses come, without thinking of the man who first made them known to me. Since those days he has passed out of the life I know. For the tragic promise of his face fulfilled itself, and he sank in a great gulf and disappeared from the sight of the London world. When I first heard of it, the horror of it held my soul dumb, and then there stirred in me a fierce rebellion. Why, I said, should a new-born soul, fresh made by God, be sent into the world, bound to a physique, handicapped by an heredity, so strong in evil tendencies, that the soul is inevitably overwhelmed and degraded by them? And I found no answer to the question. To be sure, the conventionally trained part of my mind replied to me by citing the doctrines of original sin and vicarious atonement, the laws of heredity, and of the visitation of the sins of the fathers upon the children. But I found no satisfaction in the reply. For if evil is inherent in man, I thought, and strong enough to sway him so completely, how can he be expected even to desire salvation, much less to seek it? And if men are born equal, why are some surrounded by every inducement to be virtuous, and others with every temptation to vice? And why did God make a law by which is heaped upon some souls, besides the sin innate in all, a burden of additional evil for which they are in no way responsible? I could not get away from the sense of injustice, nor could I find comfort in the dictum that reason must bow to faith. For I could not understand that God

should give man reason, and forbid him to use it in that in which he is most vitally concerned. How, amongst the various creeds and sects, am I to know, I said, where lies the truth, if I use not my reason to guide me? And the more I thought, the less comfort did I find.

But all that was many years later; during that time in London, the questioner still slept, and the world was a fair and peaceful place, where, indeed, grief shed tears sometimes, but in which pain was still unknown to me as anguish, and doubt was so thickly veiled that, meeting it, I passed it without recognising it for what it was.

## CHAPTER XXX

‘For it is man’s destiny to mount by that same stair which led him downwards ; and he who refuses to eat of the tree of knowledge does but court the starvation of his own soul.’

THOSE hours spent in Godfrey’s room made me feel sometimes as if my girlhood were very far away, and I did not often think of the old Oxford days, and had almost forgotten the fortune-teller. Now and again I wondered vaguely what she had meant by ‘a bloom of the heart,’ for, except the quickening of the great love which Arnold had created in me, nothing had happened which could be construed into bearing that meaning ; and my love for him was in the nature of a steady and permanent growth, and had no touch of the transitory character implied in the symbol she had used. But I rarely thought about the prophecy at all, so that when Judy, one evening, in a somewhat shamefaced way, asked me if I believed in palmistry, it was with a sort of start that my memory went back to the shabby lodging and the tousled hair and pale, strange eyes of Madame Borini.

The question came at the end of one of Judy’s diatribes. She had been holding forth on the necessity of women having some knowledge of life, and I, in my usual fashion, had been partly convinced, and partly scandalised by her theories. ‘I do not see the good of knowing all these dreadful things that you say exist,’ I protested. ‘How is the world benefited, or I myself any the better, for knowing the details of vice?’

‘Not the details ; nobody needs to know the details of vice unless he is a doctor or a philanthropist. But I maintain that when a woman gets to thirty, she has no right to



...the woman of to-day, who sets  
feet on broader lines than used to be such  
who claims a hearing and a place in the world  
of thought, I do say that she has no right  
of the temptations and dangers to which  
her daughters may be exposed. I say that  
cases in which she might give a helping  
knowledge and the wisdom of knowledge, as  
much which women could do to raise the stan-  
dards of ethics, if their knowledge were wider and  
more vigorous.'

'But there may be a folly of knowledge as well  
said I, 'and I can't help thinking that there are  
who are better—more good, I mean, and more  
are left in ignorance.'

'Of course there are, but they belong to the class  
and will generally find bags to put their heads  
in. I am speaking generally, and you cannot limit  
development to the level of the lowest, any  
can regulate your ideal of virtue by the views  
or your diet by the stomach of the dyspeptic.'

'Yet our grandmothers——' I began, but  
for Judy was down upon me before I could finish.

'Oh those grandmothers!'

wider life, more opportunities for developing our individuality and our brains, and we must take the responsibilities of our advantages.'

'Or the disadvantages of our responsibilities,' I suggested.

'As you like to put it,' said Judy. She stopped in front of me. 'But be sure of this, quite and perfectly sure, that you cannot do anything towards making the world as it should be, until you see it as it is. Oh, how I hate it all! the mock modesty, the moral laziness, the false delicacy that says: "We are too refined, too respectable, too pure to look on or hear of evil," and then goes and gloats over the details of vice in a French novel: "Oh, too shocking, of course, my dear, but *so* clever"; and laughs merrily at the suggestive passages in a play. It maddens me.' Then suddenly all her ardour deserted her; she plumped down beside me and: 'Do you believe in palmistry?' said she.

'No—yes—I don't know. But oh, Judy, what a sudden change!'

'That's because I'm a woman, though one of my own day; and a woman is always a woman before she is a philosopher or a theorist or anything else. She may talk generally and in the abstract, but in the end she always comes back to the particular and the concrete. Just now is the end—for the time being; so do you believe in palmistry, Annie, or not? and would you—would you——?'

'Would I what? Yes, I am sure I should; but do finish the sentence.'

'Would you like to go with me to-morrow? I've made an appointment, and now I—I am half afraid.'

'*You* afraid! O Judy!'

'Yes, you never know—suppose she told me something—horrible?'

'Well, but should you believe it?'

'I don't know. I might. I might at any rate be influenced by it. I wish—Annie, would you be done too?'

'My hand told, do you mean?'

She nodded.

'O Judy,' I exclaimed, 'you are not a woman, but a child.'

'Some people would tell you it is the same thing. 'But,' she went on, with a return to her usual manner, 'they would be wrong, quite, quite wrong; that's just what a woman is not.'

'And yet——' I began.

'No,' she interrupted, 'none of your "and yet's." It's a fact and can be demonstrated by investigation. Women lose the child element very young—most of them—and altogether; whereas a man'—she grew reflective—'whereas a man, even the most debased and the most sophisticated, even the cleverest and the most cynical, still retains a certain vein of it. I have often wondered about it, and it is the one thing that sometimes makes me think they really may be fundamentally superior to women.'

'But there *are* men,' I said, 'sort of dried up, fossil sort of people——'

'Oh, dry rot, of course, is more destructive than vice; and yet, even in their ossification (I can't help mixing my metaphors) there is a certain simplicity which appeals to the maternal element. I admit you have to know them very well before you come upon it; but I have never gone below the surface with any man without——' She broke off suddenly. 'I wonder——' she said. 'Yes, I believe that's the explanation.'

'Of what?'

'Of what we have been talking about.'

'Could you be a little consecutive?' I asked.

'It's the maternal element; that's what they appeal to, always, and that is the explanation. The child in a woman is absorbed into the sense of motherhood; in a man it persists all through life. And that is why a woman will go on loving a man, however bad he is, however ill he treats her. People say that it is folly and spanielness (there are not enough nouns in the language), weakness and inferiority. It

isn't. It's the maternal element. A woman is fundamentally a mother, and a man indestructibly a child. Annie, *will* you go with me ?'

'Of course I will, if Godfrey——'

'The appointment is for half-past two,' said Judy, 'so you can, I know.'

'Then I will,' said I ; and so it was settled.

I passed all my unoccupied time that evening and the next morning in telling myself that I did not believe in palmistry, and found that the tremor of excitement with which I followed Judy up a flight of stairs in a house in —— Street was not a whit the less for my repeated assertions. At the foot of the stair, there was painted on the wall a hand pointing upwards, and a name so well known that I cannot give it here ; and at the top of the stair a door faced us with the same name upon it ; I will call it Lucia, though that is not what it was. When I thought of the coming interview, I had imagined a sort of Madame Borini, with Madame Borini surroundings ; but the room in which we found ourselves had much of the office and none of the lodging-house atmosphere, and the lady who entered from an inner room was as different from the Oxford fortune-teller as one woman can well be from another. Alertness, I think, was the first thing about her which struck me ; there was nothing vague here, or dreamy, but on the contrary a decision of speech and manner which verged on brusquerie. Trim, slender, well-dressed, had you met her any afternoon in any drawing-room, you might have thought her remarkable, but not the least eccentric or odd. Dark hair waved back from her brow, a brow of ideals rather than of reflection, and her dark eyes were unusually bright. Her hands were the tiniest, I think, I ever saw, and so thin and slim. I thought of Browning's fancy : 'Like a bird's your hand seemed,' and wondered what lines were on that palm and if she ever scanned them with prophetic eye. She glanced from one to the other of us, then : 'Which one ?' she inquired. 'There is only one appointment.'

'It is mine,' Judy said. 'This is my friend ; and we

‘I will not refuse.’ ‘Yes, I will,’ though I can only give you a short turning to Judy, ‘will you come this way the adjoining room, and I was left alone for about half an hour, when Judy reappeared flushed and with eyes almost as bright as

‘You are to go in now,’ she said.

‘Was it exciting?’ I asked.

‘Oh yes, in a way. But of course I do

‘Of course not,’ I agreed, and passed into a room sparsely but brightly and comfortably nothing mysterious or professional about the least suggestive of any straining after. There was a little table near one of the windows looked into a busy street. The dark eyes of the little table, and one of the small hard unoccupied chair beside it.

‘Will you sit there opposite me,’ said Lu

There was a cushion on the table, covered with a chief, and beside the cushion a box of pencils placed my hands, palms upwards, on the table and rubbed some of the chalk upon them; it showed lines and showed them with great distinctness at the lines carefully followed.

was in saying that my child was a girl instead of a boy. 'And the future? Do you mind my telling you some not altogether pleasant things?' she asked.

'No, as long as——' I thought that if she were to tell me of any evil in connection with Arnold I could not bear it; and then I felt that, as I did not intend to believe what she said, such an attitude was absurd. 'No, you can be quite frank,' I said.

'It is nothing very bad, or I should not tell you; I never do tell really bad things. What is the good? And I cannot be sure of anything unless it is fairly near. You seem to me to go on pretty much as you are now for two or three years, and then comes something—another life into your life, and it seems to cause a period of disturbance and—well, unhappiness.'

'Does it last long?'

'It passes. One thing I am sure of, that the latter part of your life will be the best. You seem to come into a great peace, but how I cannot tell.'

'Will there be more troubles than that one?'

'There are others, yes, and once there seems to be a sort of break, but it is too far away for me to tell you much about it.'

'And the child—my boy?' I asked.

The palmiste hesitated, and I fancied when she answered that her voice was a little constrained. 'His line goes on beside yours; it is very strongly marked; but I cannot see far ahead, as I told you'; and then she spoke again of the peace that was to be mine after middle life.

Somehow, when I left that room, there was in my mind a dim feeling of apprehension. Recalling the palmiste's words as Judy and I walked down the street, I found nothing which reasonably accounted for it, and yet it was there. Was it her reiterated assertion that she could not see far ahead? and did I discern, veiled in that assertion and in the mists of time, beyond the limits of her spoken prophecies, slow gathering clouds of evil? Fancies, I told myself, fancies

don't know that there was anything much in it.  
And you? did she tell you anything interesting?

'She told me that something I want will come—that—but I don't believe it, I don't believe it.'

'Nor do I,' I said; 'and yet——' and I looked at Madame Borini.

'Yes, I know,' said Judy, 'and I have had many things like that; strange things that have happened, still I don't believe in it, I don't see *how* they come in it. One thing at any rate I am sure of, that I at least approve of it.'

'*After* you have been to a palmiste,' I laughed.

'Just so.'

'And this is the logical woman of our own age.'

'If you are deliberately illogical, it casts no reflection on logic.'

'Does deliberation always excuse error?'

'To a certain extent; it is at any rate better than nothing. And yet,' said Judy, as she put out a hand of farewell, 'weakness, pure weakness, that took me to the hospital this noon.'

## CHAPTER XXXI

'Mist-dimmed souls, do you wot at all  
Of the birth of love or hate,  
Or see the trend of the happenings small  
That lead to the issues great?'

IN speaking of the things that happened to me in London, I must not forget Cordelia's tea-party; especially as it was given, so she informed me, for my particular benefit, and was carried out with that respectable sumptuousness which characterised all her social undertakings. I was so much impressed by the compliment paid me and by the importance of the preparations which Cordelia was making, that I got a new dress for the occasion. I remember the dress quite well; it was a pale gray silk, trimmed with black velvet, and the sleeves were just the least bit gathered on the shoulders. It was barely the dawn then of the epoch of puffs on the upper arm, and I know I felt a little thrill of Parisian superiority as, conscious of my own gathers, I observed the still unruffled shoulders of most of my neighbours. I wore with the dress a black velvet picture hat, which was also rather a novelty, and I remember it particularly well because of the way all my sisters looked at it, and because of some remarks Cordelia made which showed me plainly that I ought to have come in a bonnet. Amy and Cynthia both wore bonnets; Cordelia of course was bareheaded; but she had an ornament, composed of black velvet and a feather, in her hair which was quite bonnet-like in spirit: I remember that every time I caught sight of it, I longed to give it a little twist and turn, for it was just not at the right angle.

There were a great many people at the party, more people,



the violin, just in the way I do *not* like to play all twiddles; very wonderful, and he had, near me remarked, a marvellous technique playing worries me. I always think that not a stream, not a cataract; there may be rapid no waterfalls; or it may be an ocean, full waves may break; but there must not be something, though, in the way of music which made an impression upon me which would pass away. It was getting late and many of them when Cordelia cleared her throat and said for silence, as Mr. Keston was going to to whistle to us. A murmur of approval and the talking stopped, save for such comments as 'Quite charming,' 'He whistles divinely,' 'I think to equal it,' and the like.

'Who is Mr. Keston?' I inquired of my friend.

'I thought everybody knew Ralph Keston. He is—he is, well he's just Ralph Keston about wherever you go, and he whistles, and is going to be married—according to report—'

'And does he——'

'Hush,' came from Cordelia, with a reproving look.

a quiver—not enough to cause the surface of the notes to tremble, but within them, as it were, sending a throb through the hearts of the listeners, or through mine, in any case. I did not know the air he was whistling; afterwards I learned that it was Irish; but it struck me as the saddest thing I had ever heard, and it moved me to a new emotion. Other music, the music of the concerts, opened to me, as I have said, windows into strange and wondrous worlds, but this soft sound touched me in a more personal way; instead of leading me out of myself, it seemed to pierce to something within; something that never had stirred before, but that seemed now to vibrate throughout my being. The sound did not last long, and as soon as it ceased I came forth out of my corner, for I wanted to see the man who had made it. I do not know what I had expected to see, but I suppose I had imagined somebody quite unlike the ordinary human being. I know that I was grievously disappointed, for there, surrounded by a group of people pouring forth thanks and compliments and entreaties for ‘just one more,’ was quite an ordinary London man; well dressed, well groomed, passably good-looking, but quite ordinary; so I decided. Another moment and Cordelia was leading him towards me; a few words of introduction were spoken, and I found myself standing beside him, and expected, no doubt, to say something complimentary about his whistling. Because he was so ordinary, I felt vexed somehow that he should have the power to impress me, and I became particularly conventional, repeating what I had heard half a dozen other people say. ‘Thank you so much for your music. It was quite a treat.’

‘And yet you are fond of music.’

The reply took me aback and I looked up quickly. ‘Why “and yet”?’

‘Because people who are really fond of music never say that it is a treat; unless indeed they despise it—which is quite possible in this case. My performances are not classical.’ He smiled as he spoke, and the smile, I thought, made him look more interesting.

and then  
I am asked to whistle, I look round the  
is anybody I care to whistle to. If there  
that person; all that I can give out is for  
day I did as usual and I chose—you.'

'You thought I would make a go  
lightly.

'Yes. Was I wrong?'

I felt that I did not want him to know  
affected me, and I answered still in the same  
you that I liked it very much.'

'Ah, I beg your pardon,' he said quickly.

'Why should you beg my pardon?'

'Because you have rebuked me, and that  
I have been—at least indiscreet.'

I did not know quite how to reply to  
that I had resented his question. 'Please  
I said still lightly, and then asked what he  
whistled. He was about to tell me when  
and said that his aunt, old Lady Puncheston  
wanted him to see her to her carriage. Ten  
clock, and found it was very late, and so  
told her that I must go back to Godfrey.

'I have enjoyed myself so much,' said I.

'We are always pleased to see you at Bryanston Square, my dear Annie,' he replied, 'whenever your duty to Godfrey permits you to leave him.'

'They are most kind,' I reflected on my way home, '*most* kind, but—somehow—a little chilling.'

I found Godfrey somewhat irritable; he had insisted upon my going to the party, for at the last moment when I thought he seemed to dislike the idea of my leaving him, I had offered to give it up, and yet he was not quite pleased when I went. He showed his vexation by correcting my pronunciation while I read to him, and it is disconcerting to be pulled up repeatedly when you are doing your best to read nicely; but I managed to put up with it, for I knew he never would be able to go to parties and enjoy himself any more; and besides, he was dependent on me and appealed to that maternal element which Judy had so vigorously insisted upon.

## CHAPTER XXI

'As though a dream were quickened in

'Though less than God, yet more to man

THE three months of our stay in London and Godfrey was little, if any, better for would not prolong it. 'They are doing said, 'and I would rather be at home.' began for our return to Camp Holt. I sometimes I longed for the country, known would be upon the fields and the woods, tion, of the beginnings of things, yet I was sorry as the time drew near for our departure of it I felt quite melancholy. I have never from anywhere; I think the last day in any has not been particularly happy there, is a sense of regret. I said something of this bade her good-bye, but Cynthia did not answer.

'I don't mind the last day,' she said, 'but place one always knows exactly what to think the first day, before you settle down uncomfortable.'

Cordelia to whom I did not answer.

that of Alethea Simmonds ; but I could not help wondering if her artist were very attractive, and if the life they lived together had anything in it at all like what I used to picture in my early dreams.

That last day in London is a day that stands out vividly in my memory, apart from the fact of its finality ; for two things happened in the course of it which deeply impressed me. The first was this. Arnold and I were out for our morning walk ; and, because it was our last day, instead of keeping to the Park, as was our usual practice, we turned into the streets and walked up Piccadilly as far as St. James's Church. It was there, just in front of the church, that Arnold, turning to look behind him, as children will, ran into a man who was coming in the opposite direction. The man stopped, and I stopped, and was about to murmur an apology, when the words died upon my lips ; for there before me, a little above me, was the face of my Dream. The face and not the face, for though the features were the same, the expression was different. The lines of the mouth were self-indulgent rather than austere, and there was none of the uplifted triumph in the eyes. Those eyes met mine with a half-startled look, and for a moment we both stood mute, gaze held by gaze. Then, without a word, the man lifted his hat and passed on, and Arnold remarked, rubbing his little nose, that he thought the people in London had very hard legs.

As for me, through all that day, until the evening, the face went with me, and the quick look on it, almost as of recognition. What parts of us had met before ? for that we had met, I was profoundly convinced ; and where ? What was that strange world in which there had been only he and I ? Questions that I well might ask, but asked without hope of answer. And should we ever meet again ? Would the chance that had thrown us in that sea of life, the London streets, for one instant together, bring us ever once more face to face ? It was idle to ask, and yet the thought would not leave me. It followed me to Camp Holt, and kept me company there.

I said, of course, that I would see him. I always came to put him to bed at ten o'clock, and generally went to my room. I would willingly have sat up till midnight to talk with Judy.

It was a little after half-past ten when she came, white, and beautiful, I thought, with her hair accentuated.

'A dull party,' she said, 'but I could not do otherwise. It is always the duller things that are the most to get away from. As it was, they didn't like the men had only just come up.'

She sat down near the fire, and talked very much so that I began to wonder if anything were the matter. Though she talked a good deal at times, was very quiet. But it was not for me to question her, or to ask what she apparently wished to hide. With a pause, I merely remarked that her frock suited her.

'You like it?'

'Yes,' I said. 'Your appearance altogether very beautiful to-night, Judy.'

'Do you think so?' She got up and stood in the doorway.

'I suppose nobody appeals to everybody,' I said, 'but you generally know at once if people are going to like you or not.'

'If you have any sense you do.'

'But you, Judy'—for I had grown very fond of her—'if you took trouble, anybody you chose would like you.'

'You are altogether wrong.'

Something in her voice made me turn to her. Her face was in shadow, as I have said, but the firelight glistened on two tears which were making their way slowly down her cheeks.

She was one of the only two women I ever saw whom tears did not disfigure; sitting there, half shaded in the flickering light of the fire, she seemed to me infinitely pathetic; perhaps because it was so unlike her to cry.

'Judy!' I exclaimed; 'Judy, what is it?'

She did not answer; but, getting up, went and knelt by the fender.

'I'm such a fool,' she said, 'such an utter, utter fool. And I thought myself so safe!'

'From what?' I ventured.

She did not answer at first, but knelt there, the firelight playing on her white frock and quivering face.

'I have had so many men in love with me,' she said presently, 'and I never cared, never, though I often wanted to and tried to. I thought I couldn't, that it wasn't in me.'

I took the little square of lace that had fallen to the ground and brushed away the tears from her cheeks, but I knew her too well to speak.

'And then to go and care. I'm not so very unhappy, Annie; but it's the mortification.'

'Why should you be mortified?' I said softly.

'Why? To let myself care for a man who—to whom I am absolutely nothing! It hurts so—I don't mean the caring; I could bear *that*; but it hurts my pride.'

'How do you know he doesn't care?'

'How?' She gave a little mirthless laugh. 'He shows



he said and did everything he could to do for me, and I loved him more than any other woman. She was silent for a moment and then: 'Do you know what that part of the story she asked.

Again I shook my head.

'She said that I could marry him if I did, I should be very unhappy. Can you be more absurdly opposed to the truth?'

'It may be true,' I murmured.

'True? No. I was fool enough—but I who thought myself so strong! though I was in the fire!' She paused, and then flung out her hands half to choke her: 'Annie, it's horrible! I was a slave to a man.'

'You couldn't be a slave, Judy.'

'So I thought, but—— If he were to call to me, so to speak, from any part of the world I should go to him like a dog that's whined.'

'You care so much?' I said.

'Yes, I care.' She dropped her face in her hands.

I could only be silent; knowing her; and though she had shown me the sore place I did not dare to touch it.

'No, I can't even do that,' I answered.

'I shall miss you, Annie.'

'I can't bear to go away and leave you unhappy.'

'Oh, I shall get over it. I'm not the first woman or the last to make an idiot of herself. And I suppose there are degrees; I suppose I *could* be more unhappy than I am.'

Afterwards I thought of those words. Ah, my poor Judy!

-----  
' I fearless stand  
While I hold Love's hand.'

WHEN Arnold was seven years old, Godfrey should go to school. At first I strongly opposed the idea; I think it was the rebelled against any wish or command of send Arnold away, a child of seven, to school into the world was, I felt, a thing that no duty, gratitude, or anything else could move. Yet, as I thought, I began to see the Godfrey's arguments. The child led a practically no companions of his own age constantly being with his half-brothers was not he grew older. Yet I held out, for a long I would not give in to argument, however supported by reason. Every mother will know every mother will know what it cost me at my mind to do as Godfrey wished. I was decision by Arnold himself, for when one said 'You wouldn't like to go to school, would you?' expecting a vehement negative, to my surprise he answered with a simple 'Yes.'

He hesitated. 'I shouldn't like the leaving, but—but I should like to go.'

'There would be a lot of lessons,' I said. I knew that it was unfair of me to insist upon the dark side of the picture; but I did so want to keep him. But he was not to be discouraged by my insinuations against school life; when I spoke of lessons, he said:

'Yes, but there would be cricket too, and football, and fighting.'

After that I gave in. Wild ideas of learning to play cricket, and of getting up an eleven with the aid of the gardeners and stablemen did flit, I confess, across my brain; but I knew I could not fight with him. So it was all settled; and I took him up to London to Swears and Wells' to get his outfit; and I was so miserable and Arnold was so interested and happy. A day or two before his departure, his spirits began to flag, and then it was my turn to be bright and gay, to slur over all the drawbacks of going to school, and enlarge upon the advantages. He did his best to back me up, dear little child, but sometimes I saw his lips quiver, and he had a way of retiring to a wood shed in the yard near the kitchen-garden, always his retreat in time of trouble since he had been a tiny mite, which I knew meant tears secretly shed. Bertram and Ellis followed him about those last few days like dogs, and often I wished they would go away and leave me alone with the boy, instead of sitting watching him with their stupid, affectionate eyes. But I could not find it in my heart to dismiss them, and after all, their love for Arnold touched me. They both gave him parting presents. Ellis gave him a box of beetles, the choicest specimens, I believe, of his 'collection'; and Bertram, poor Bertram, cut off the end of the tail of Arnold's best beloved dog, and presented it at the last moment, tied round with blue ribbon. I never shall forget the scene: Arnold, half indignant at the injury done to his favourite and hardly knowing what to do or say; Bertram, with a foolish smile, holding the gruesome keepsake in his

... when I turned from the platform to  
the carriage.

I think I remember, separately and the  
coming and departure of Arnold's all through  
Each of them stands out to me as a distinct  
memory. But there were main features common  
on the afternoon of his arrival, Bertram  
and I had tea in the schoolroom together,  
men now of between thirty and forty, present  
in the shape of cake and jam, upon the  
table, as he finally assured them, if he ate any  
burst; and at this they invariably laughed.  
Then there were all the dogs to be visited  
and before dinner Arnold was interviewed and  
had to give an account of the place he took  
classes. It was generally a fairly good one,  
not particularly distinguish himself, either at  
school or at Winchester. He was clever—  
have been from the way he talked to me some  
kinds of books he liked, though I know that  
spectacles are magnifiers of talent—but he was  
and though he would read a good deal when  
at school he worked just enough to keep his  
general level.

happy as ever, but the going made him as miserable as it did me. His last meal was always sumptuous and abortive; he chose a favourite dish and so did I, and we spoke as if we were going to enjoy ourselves enormously; and then, when the dishes came, we could not eat them, but blew our noses a great deal, and pretended all sorts of things to keep up the fiction that we were not crying; while Bertram and Ellis, whose appetites nothing could daunt, ate up the prepared feast.

I do not know when Arnold realised that his half-brothers were not as other men; I think he noticed it the first time he came home for his holidays, but he did not speak of it till he had gone and returned many times. At last one day he said hesitatingly: 'I say, mother, those fellows, Bertram and Ellis, they're not quite—quite—they're rather odd, aren't they?'

'Yes,' I said; 'they are not quite like other people.'

'They're—it's their minds, I suppose?'

'Yes; I don't think their minds have grown or developed. They have stayed quite young, while their bodies have gone on getting older.'

'It's awfully hard lines on them.' He reflected. 'I wonder why some fellows are made all right and others all wrong?'

'I don't know,' was all I could find to say.

'If I made people, I would make all men brave and clever, and all women beautiful—like you.'

'O Arnold,' I laughed, 'what a dull world if all the women were alike.'

'No,' he maintained, 'for if all the women were like you, I shouldn't half mind marrying. As it is, I think I shall be a bachelor.'

I could tell of so many of his sayings and doings, for they all crowd back upon me; sometimes I think I have never forgotten any single thing he ever did or said. But in another way, I cannot, I dare not; even now, after the many years, I cannot speak of him much, can only give just a glimpse of him here and there to show something of what he was like and what a large part he made of my life.

should miss her terribly ; she was my dear friend, and though we did not often meet as her home was in London she was withi-  
tance. Now, too, there would be a husband's interests to come between her and me. I was exactly jealous, and yet I felt that the friend could not be quite what it had been. He assured me of the contrary during a long visit to the bedroom the night before she was married in London just for one night, to be present at which herself came down to Camp Holt and begged of Godfrey ; I think it was the only time later on—during all those years of illness—for a night.

'A husband is a husband, of course,' said I the night before the fire, 'and *you* know, for I am in my most grovelling mood, what he is. I think, I have always said it, that love is a rival to friendship. Why should it be ?'

'I can't judge,' said I, 'for I have never been married.'

She looked at me. 'Oh, I hope you never will.'

'I should like to *have* known it,' I remarked.

'Yes, if it were behind you ; but I don't think it will.'

'I tell you it will make no difference. In actual bodily meeting, of course it will, but not in feeling. You have your own place, Annie, and you will always be you, and nobody else can take it.'

She spoke truly; our friendship never died, though there came a time when I thought her words had been a false prophecy.

I saw Basil Home only twice; for five minutes on the evening of my arrival, and at the wedding the next day. I spent my one evening in town under the auspices of Sir Reginald Creagh, and I saw Judy's future husband for a few moments only while I was waiting for Sir Reginald to fetch me. When I saw him, I had a cold feeling of disappointment. I had intended and expected to like him immensely, and had endowed him with many of the qualities which I used to attribute to the imagined but never-encountered heroes of my girlhood; and I found myself face to face with what seemed to me a rather cold and cynical man, self-confident and a trifle affected. 'He is not nearly good enough for her,' was my first spontaneous reflection, and then, feeling the thought almost a disloyalty to Judy, I set myself to overcome it; with scanty success, for in spite of my efforts and in spite of his good looks—for he was very handsome—I did not take to him, as the homely expression is. He came downstairs with me to the hall, and looking back from his arm to wave farewell to Judy, I saw her framed in the doorway of the drawing-room. Her eyes were fixed—O love, are you no rival to friendship?—on him and not on me, and I never shall forget the expression in them of joyous and supreme devotion. A pang went through me. 'God help her!' was the unconscious cry of my heart. 'What is she giving it all to, and for?'

The next day, though, at the wedding, Basil Home made a better impression upon me, and I thought he played the difficult part of bridegroom about as well as it could be played. The wedding, I suppose, was like most other weddings; but to me there was only one live figure amidst the shifting panorama of people—Judy. I see her coming down the aisle,





## CHAPTER XXXIV

'Black with the wrath of many storms,  
White with the drift of mountain snow,  
O woman of the deep, strange eyes,  
What secrets dost thou know?'

WHEN I had told Sir Reginald that I was going to Judy's wedding, and that I was to stay in London one night, he said :

'Can you give me that evening? If so, I will come to town too. The original of the portrait is in London now, and I would take you to see her.'

'Oh yes,' I said, 'of course, yes.' I knew that Judy's time was engaged and that she would not mind my going out, so I had no hesitation in accepting Sir Reginald's invitation ; and the idea of seeing that strange face in flesh and blood reality was the one thing of all others at that time that I longed to do.

I was on the tiptoe of expectation as I drove away from Judy's door that spring evening. The country mouse, after gnawing steadily through even days, had happened upon a phase of adventure, and I felt as joyous as a schoolgirl out for a holiday in the middle of term time. Sir Reginald took me to dine at a restaurant filled with people of all kinds and degrees, where we had strange Italian dishes, such as I had never tasted or seen before, and which I hardly more than tasted now, for I was too excited to eat much. The custom of dining at restaurants and hotels was not then in vogue as it is now ; still, as Sir Reginald explained, there were many places more fashionable to which he might have taken me.

'But I thought you would like this best,' he said. 'One sees a much greater variety of people here, many more types ;

and a number of artists frequent this place, and poets and musicians—especially musicians.'

I *couldn't* like anything better,' I said, and felt what I said. I was enjoying myself amazingly. The lights, the people, the waiters who spoke all languages, the little tables (I had never dined out of a private house before), even the florid Italian decoration of the room—all charmed and interested me. And it was so, so different from the dark-walled dining-room at Camp Holt, with Burge and James and Thomas standing in solemn observance of one's appetite, with Godfrey in his wheeled chair making comments upon the cook's shortcomings, and my stepsons making no comment upon anything, except the very practical one of devouring all that came their way. It hardly seemed to me possible that I could be really here, and that to-morrow evening I should again be there, trying hard to make conversation and not to mind when Ellis's hand made surreptitious dives at the crystallised fruit between the courses. One or the other must be a dream; and looking round and seeing all the people at the little tables, not striving after conversation, but bubbling over with it, I told myself that this, the actual scene about me, was the reality, that yesterday and to-morrow were the dream, and that I would not dream again but keep in this animated world. And all the time I knew I was thinking nonsense, but did not mind, so only I might enjoy the present to the full.

After dinner we had Turkish coffee, and Sir Reginald smoked a cigarette; and then we threaded our way through the little tables, amidst the talking people, and were outside on the pavement, and in another moment whirling up the street in a hansom.

The people who go about a great deal, who are always on the way to or from a theatre or a ball or a party of some kind, seem to me to pass by, unobserving, a great part of the enjoyment they might have—I mean the driving through the lighted streets. To me, when father and I used to go about together, that was always half, no, a quarter of the fun; I never tired of the streets at night; and now, when for so many years

I had not seen them thus, they made for me a sort of fairy-land.

‘Would you like the glass down?’ asked Sir Reginald.

‘The glass? Oh no. Let me see as much as I can.’

Hurrying people, loitering couples, flaring lamps, lighted windows, here and there an organ playing, and children dancing in the road. By and by all these sights and sounds grew rarer, save the lamps; we were speeding northward and leaving the busy streets. It was a sweet, soft evening, with the breath of spring in it, and in the sky thin fleeting clouds played at hiding the stars. Northward still, to quiet streets, where passengers by foot or carriage were rare; on one side of the road were trees, and on the other, retired houses behind garden strips; and still the lumbering omnibuses toiling by. Then a turn into a wider, yet more deserted road; no more omnibuses now, and the houses stood apart, gardens around them and trees in the gardens. And here, before one of the houses, the cab drew up. I remember standing in a flutter of expectation beside Sir Reginald, waiting for the door to be opened. I have a vague impression of a paved path through a garden, of entering a house and crossing a hall; and then we were in a lighted room. The room seemed full of people, and in the centre—for they were all gathered round her—sat a woman. She was stout, elderly, unwieldy somewhat in figure, badly dressed; but there was the massive, imperious face, and there the protruding, penetrating eyes. In front of her was a little table covered with spread-out cards, and beside them a brass ash-tray in which lay a cigarette. She looked round, welcome on her face, as we came towards her. ‘How do you do, Reggie?’ and then to me as Sir Reginald introduced me: ‘Glad to see you, my dear.’

We took our places in the circle, and for the next hour I looked and listened. The things that struck me most were first, the powerful personality of the woman; never before or since have I come in contact with a being so strongly magnetic; then the grasp and force of her intellect; then her complexity. All the evening she talked, sometimes considering

on the game, never ceasing to follow the  
another's discourse ; and all the time s  
rolling them with her beautiful hand  
things about her. There were people c  
sent, people one might have seen ar  
people such as I had never seen, wit  
faces. For men came from all parts t  
from all the countries of Europe, and fi  
of the world ; and laid before her the me  
and listened with deference to her exp  
All the time I was trying to find the c  
wide chord of her being, and always w  
struck it, the key changed, and I had  
For at one time I thought her chiefly a  
at another an enthusiast ; now she was a  
and again a dispassionate philosopher.  
ment of culture, the most refined, mo  
then steeped in an atmosphere semi-l  
Frenchwoman in wit, subtlety, and cl  
daughter of a half-tutored race. Once  
and swore energetically, and once the  
soft with tears as some one present to  
Inscrutable, yet with a primitive simplici

mind, the masterful and magnetic personality of the woman which drew men to her; or repelled them, for, in common with all strong personalities, she excited fierce antagonism, and I suppose there never was anybody better hated than she.

It was ten o'clock when her visitors took leave of her. Every evening, after the labours of the day, she received from eight till ten; then, when her guests had gone, sat awhile quietly with the one or two fellow-workers, men and women, who lived in the house with her—her children, she called them. That evening I was one of them, for when Sir Reginald rose to go, she detained him. 'No, sit down again; I have something I want to talk to you about.'

Sir Reginald took a seat beside her, and they spoke together—I think of the researches he was making; but I heard little of what they said, for some of the other people in the room began to talk to me, and I was soon completely interested in what they told me of the life they led. But by and by the little company of two and our bigger one were merged into a single group again, and we sat talking together, the woman of the picture chatting comfortably as an ordinary elderly lady might have done, but always interesting in the substance, and original in the expression, of what she said. And as we sat there round the fire in the quiet room, a strange thing happened; for our hostess stopped suddenly in what she was saying, and her face grew pale and set. Startled, I glanced at Sir Reginald, but he nodded reassuringly, and looking round the circle, I saw that, though everybody was silent, nobody seemed disturbed. And then a voice spoke, a strange odd voice, new to my ear, altogether different from the voice I had listened to all the evening; a man's voice, but it came from the lips of the rigid figure in the chair. It spoke with a curious tone of authority, and spoke of marvellous things, some of which I could understand, some of which were incomprehensible to me, none of which I care to set down here. It spoke for about ten minutes; and then, after a moment's space of silence, the

to the terms of something within acc  
on the rare occasions on which I h  
have just described, I have invariab  
gestions as to acting, ventriloquism,  
an explanation, which to me, pers  
what I saw and heard that evening, l  
none, and I simply write down what  
to me through the evidence of my se  
I know, to which many people attach a  
illogically enough, they maintain th  
may be deceived.

When we took our leave, my host  
moment. 'Will you ever come in an  
'I don't know,' I answered.

She looked at me keenly. 'You n  
look that way.'

After that evening, I never saw her  
I have read some of her books ; books  
and many of the theories of which, s  
invented : a curious accusation, to my  
been far more wonderful to have inve  
piled and translated them, as she pro  
never saw her again, but I have nev

name, much devotion has been laid at your feet ; and half the world has written *Charlatan* upon your grave, and the other half *Prophetess*. Men will long dispute as to your aims and practices ; but there is your book, written years ago, in which is stated much that science then jeered at, and that science has since proved to be true ; theories still scorned, but which may be verified yet ; doctrines which have permeated insensibly the thought of the day ; traditions which lead back from man's evolution to his origin. In many lands you stirred up strife, and some of the sounds you drew from the harp of life were discords ; yet I think it is harmony you have bequeathed to the song of the ages hence, and that time will spell out your message as one of reconciliation and peace.



‘ Now all is changed. The very wi  
And the birds sing aloud from ever  
And my heart leaps.’

I PASS on now over the years till I co  
stands out vivid and significant in my  
of hot, bright days it was and brilliant sl  
at one time of my life that there was not  
than to wear a white muslin frock, to lie  
grass, and look up at green branches throu  
faint, fleeting glimpses of the blue of space  
one, as far as weather was concerned, in  
indulged the fancy to the full; but duri  
of the day I was generally indoors with G  
the days when he was wheeled out on to th  
nothing but sit sedately, for he would hav  
had I ventured to stretch myself upon the g  
the white frocks, and sometimes, when I wa  
I looked up at the sky through a wealth  
curiously, and as it seemed to me at the  
happy. Unreasonably, because, I said to  
great deal to make me so. Arnold was  
greater part of my days was spent in  
husband and I.

and in that space of leisure took a book outside, or potted about the garden, or strolled sometimes through the wood—for there was a pine wood not far from the house. There was one little walk I often took, because it brought me to a house in which I used to fancy I should like to live. It was a low, white house, and it stood not far back from a white, pine-bordered road that ran for a mile through the wood. It was not a particularly pretty house, but it took my fancy, partly, I think, because it had a verandah, up which jasmine climbed, and roses about the upper windows. Then there was a smooth lawn with beds of the brightest flowers, and behind and on either side, but not too close, were the pine woods. I used to think it was a place in which two lovers might live and make fine things together, in painting, poetry, or music. Generally it was empty, for it was used only as a shooting-box, and rarely occupied except in the late autumn; but this summer it was let, I was told, to a Mrs. St. Clair, a lady in delicate health, whose husband, a soldier, was on foreign service. I did not intend to call upon her, for it seemed useless to go and see people unless I could show them some hospitality, and Godfrey, now that he could move, to a certain extent, about the rooms and in the garden, objected more than ever to visitors. But I used still to go and look at the house sometimes from my own side of the road, and I thought it must be a very pleasant place to live in during that brilliant summer weather. Generally it was quite quiet and I saw nobody about; Mrs. St. Clair, being an invalid, did not get up to breakfast, I supposed; but one morning, when I reached the little gate that led from our part of the wood to the road, I heard the sound of a piano. I was immediately interested, and I crossed the road and stood at the garden gate listening. One of the French windows giving on to the verandah was open, and I could hear distinctly. It was a sound as of running chords that came out to me, like an accompaniment, and then somebody began to whistle a melody. Instantly my half-indifferent attention was roused to the fullest interest, for the whistling was of a peculiar quality, liquid, vibrating, curiously

full and deep in tone. Was there more than one person in the world who could whistle like that? I recalled Cordelia's party; in that drawing-room full of people I had heard what had struck me as a masterly performance in an unsuspected art; here the sounds that I listened to, with the pine wood all around, the patches of bright flowers before my eyes, and the hum of insects in the air, seemed like the palpitating utterance of Nature's own emotions. The melody ceased and the piano; then the window was flung wide open, and there on the verandah stood Ralph Keston. I had not time to move away, and surprise too held me stationary—for I was surprised in spite of my speculations. We faced each other a moment, and then each said: 'You!'

Ralph Keston came down the garden path. 'Mrs. West! This is an undreamed-of pleasure.'

'You can't be more surprised to see me than I am to see you,' said I.

'But what brought you here?' he asked.

'I live here. And you?'

'The claims of family affection. My sister has been very ill——'

'Is Mrs. St. Clair your sister?' I interrupted.

'Yes, and the doctor said she was to have bright and pleasant society; so I came down.'

'I hope she is improving.'

'I am not a mustard plaster; I don't act all at once; and I only arrived yesterday. But won't you come in and sit down?'

'I can't. I have not called upon your sister.'

'Hadn't you better do it now?'

'No, I couldn't; why, your sister would think—— The fact is, I did not call because my husband is such an invalid that we cannot entertain at all; and it is no use to call on people unless you can show them a little civility.'

'Oh, that would not matter to Alice. She had a very bad fall and hurt her back, and is hardly allowed to walk at all yet, so she does not want entertainments. But I know she would like if you would come in and see her sometimes.'

'I will come, then, gladly, but not now. I will call properly in the afternoon; that is, if she does not mind my coming between five and six. I generally read to my husband the early part of the afternoon and then I drive.'

'And after five you are disengaged?'

'Yes, generally.'

'And to be found if one came along?'

'Yes, as a rule.'

'May I try some afternoon?'

'Of course. I shall be pleased to see you. Will you tell Mrs. St. Clair why it was that I did not come before?'

'And that you will come soon?'

'Yes, I shall try to come to-morrow. And now good-bye, for I must hurry home.'

'Which is your way?'

'Through the wood there, by that little path opposite?'

'May I come a little way with you?'

'But you have no hat,' I said, as he came out into the road.

'Don't you want to get one?'

'Oh no, the trees will be hat enough, and they say it's good for the health to be bareheaded.'

He came with me the whole way through the wood, talking all the time, an easy flow of talk that left me little to do except to listen and be amused. Since those twenty-four hours in London, at the time of Judy's wedding, the dull routine of my life had not been interrupted, and it was not difficult to amuse me. My spirits rose, as always when anything pleasant happened, and I thought the morning more beautiful than any the summer had brought us yet. I remember that when I went into Godfrey's library to try and persuade him to spend an hour or two in the garden, I told him the weather was perfectly heavenly, and he said I had a way of using exaggerated language which I ought to check.

'I'll try,' I said meekly. 'But it really is rather fine. Won't you let Burge wheel you out under the trees?'

But nothing would induce Godfrey to come outside that morning; so I had to write his letters and read the leading

article surrounded by dull red flock paper walls and with closed windows, for Godfrey said it was much cooler if you did not open them. I dare say this was true, but it was such a musty coolness, and the garden looked so bright through the great squares of plate glass. Yet, in spite of the mustiness of the room, and the fact that Godfrey altered his mind several times, and I had, consequently, to write more than one letter twice over, I was unusually gay that morning, for my thoughts were continually leaving the writing-table and running about the pine woods with the lately encountered denizen of the outer world from which I had for so long been cut off.

'I wonder how long he will stay?' I thought. 'Yes, Godfrey, I have written "*I am in receipt of your letter of yesterday's date.*"—A week at least, I should think—"request you to send an estimate"—and sure to call once; perhaps twice—*your charges appear to me*"—and I shall hear all sorts of things, about people, and—Yes, "*a prompt reply.*" Yours faithfully, I suppose?—rather amusing, and better looking than I thought him at first—Is this to be copied, Godfrey?—country clothes suit him better perhaps.—"*Dear Mr. Goodenough, My subscription to the work in which you are interested*"—If I call to-morrow, he might come here the next day—"a cheque made payable"—or the day after. I will show him the beech walk, I think, and perhaps my own garden, if he turns out sympathetic. At Cordelia's I didn't think—but this morning——'

'Annie have you enclosed that cheque?' said Godfrey.

'Yes, no—at least—— Is it to be made payable to the company or the secretary?'

'I told you the secretary.'

'Did you? I thought——'

'I don't know where your ears are this morning,' said Godfrey testily, 'or your wits.'

'I'm so sorry,' said I, and to myself: 'I will *not* think of enjoying myself till it's all finished.' Aloud: 'I have crossed it on the London and Westminster Bank. That's right, isn't it?'

‘Yes.’

‘And the address is somewhere in Finsbury Circus, I think?’

‘I can’t be supposed to remember addresses. It’s on the bill, no doubt, if you will take the trouble to look.’

Godfrey had had a bad night and was irritable that morning and disposed to indulge in what Judy called ‘husbandries.’ As I thought of the word, I thought of Judy, and wondered if Basil Home had fallen into husbandries or if he were still the devoted lover she had written of during her honeymoon. I sighed as I thought of her, for I had not heard from her for over two months; during the last year her letters had been scanty and few, with just general news in them, but no Judy; and I began to think that her declarations as to our continued and unaltered friendship had been but empty words. I did not mind so long as she was happy, I told myself, but I was hurt, nevertheless, knowing that if I had been ever so happy, I would have written to Judy all the same; and insensibly my letters grew shorter and colder too.

I called on Mrs. St. Clair on my way back from my drive the next afternoon. I found her a bright little person, elegant of attire and fluent of tongue, and very anxious to get well enough to go back to what she called life; which meant, I gathered, a rushing from place to place at the same time that everybody else rushed. London, Cowes, Scotland, the Riviera; these she was in the habit of visiting regularly, with race meetings and week-ends at country-houses thrown in, and it seemed to me that she must spend large portions of her life in the train; but I listened with open eyes and ears to her accounts of her ordinary pursuits; and, if I could not amuse her with counter experiences, I paid her at least the tribute of a fixed attention. Her brother was not there when I arrived, but appeared when we were in the middle of tea, and for the second time walked home with me through the wood.

‘It’s terribly dull for Alice,’ he said. ‘The doctors insisted upon her being in a quiet place, but she is not a woman

who does to be much alone, and none of her friends can come to her for another month.'

'And you, I suppose, cannot stay with her?'

'No, I'm due in Wiltshire next week.'

'I will try to go and see her as often as I can,' said I; 'and no doubt the other people about——'

'The other people about are such bores,' broke in Mr. Keston.

'How many have you seen?'

'None, but I know; I know the ordinary country person who goes up to London for six weeks in the year and diligently studies the Academy, and goes to the Opera once, and concerts at the Albert Hall, and to a play or two 'if it isn't *too* French,' and comes back and asks you for the rest of the year if you have seen so-and-so, or heard such-and-such, and talks about *the* picture of the year.'

A sudden *esprit de corps* on behalf of my neighbourhood awoke in me. 'You are quite wrong,' I said; 'there are many people about here who do not spend all their time vegetating in the country, and who are quite—quite intelligent.'

'Oh, intelligent, eh?'

'Quite as intelligent as the ordinary London person.'

'That's one for me, I suppose. If I were to beg the neighbourhood's pardon, would its representative—no, not its representative, for I am sure you do not the least represent it—but its spokeswoman—would its spokeswoman pardon me?'

'The neighbourhood,' I replied, 'is generous.'

As we parted he asked when he might come and see me.

'When you can find time,' I said, for he had been trying to persuade me that he was a very busy man.

'Then I will come to-morrow, after five.'

At his first coming I showed him, as I had planned, the beech walk, and also, for he proved to be sympathetic, my own garden with the sundial. We had tea together under the

ash-tree; and I realised, when the visit was over, how much I had enjoyed it. After that he came often; he fell into the way, in fact, of dropping in for tea, and staying on talking upon all kinds of subjects, till it was time for me to go back to Godfrey. And I began to live upon his visits; I did not know it then, but I know it now; I lived upon the evening visits and the morning meetings, for we met most mornings in the wood. I do not know what became of his engagement in Wiltshire; he certainly did not keep it, but stayed on and on at the White House, greatly to his sister's pleasure. She, I soon found, did not know how often he came to Camp Holt, for one afternoon when I was having tea with her:

'I can't think what has happened to Ralph,' she said; 'he has quite given up afternoon tea, and he used to be devoted to it. Now he always chooses five o'clock to start out for a walk; he says it is the best time of the day; but my experience of him has always been that nothing would induce him to walk, unless he had a gun in his hand, and that nothing at all would induce him to miss his tea.'

The knowledge that he left his sister to come and have tea with me made me feel rather guilty, and I was on the verge of an apology; but instinct prompted, and reflection maintained, silence, for, I thought, he has probably not told her in order to avoid hurting her feelings, and it would be awkward for him if I were to tell her now.

I think Ralph had been many times to Camp Holt before he saw my stepsons, but one afternoon they came back very late from their afternoon ramble, and crossed the lawn while he and I were sitting by the tea-table under the ash-tree. Generally they avoided visitors, but that day Ellis had captured an enormous beetle, and his desire to exhibit it overpowered his shyness. He came rushing up, followed by Bertram, both with very dusty boots and hot, damp faces. They lifted their caps, a courtesy they had been taught when they were little, and never failed in, and then Ellis plunged into a spluttering account of the chase and capture of the beetle. 'Bertram saw him first, and then I saw him. It was



up a bank with brambles, and the dogs when they saw us climbing up—Tasker scratched his nose—ha, ha! and Bruce barked, and then Bertram fell and nearly squashed the beetle——’

‘And Ellis, he—he—he hit me,’ broke in Bertram.

‘Well, such a weight he is,’ said Ellis, ‘to fall on anything. He has no notion of how to make a collection, Bertram hasn’t.’

‘Well, you got the beetle all right in the end, I see,’ said I. ‘And now you must be hungry, and tea is waiting, I know.’

‘Yes, I am, I know,’ agreed Bertram, his mouth full of a Victoria sandwich which he had purloined from the table.

They both lifted their hats again, and hurried towards the house.

‘Who are they?’ Mr. Keston asked.

‘My stepsons.’

‘And do they live here?’

‘Yes.’

‘Always?’

‘Yes.’

‘And your husband is an invalid, and you do not go about in the neighbourhood or away from home?’

‘Not often.’

‘Poor child!’ he said.

There was something in his look and his tone as he spoke that gave me an odd feeling—a feeling which caused me to turn away my eyes from his; and instinctively I refused to view my position as one provocative of pity. ‘No wonder,’ I said lightly, ‘that I am rapidly degenerating even from the ordinary country person into the ordinary country cabbage.’

‘How do you manage to live?’ he asked.

‘Oh, we have plenty to eat, you know,’ I replied.

‘It’s horrible,’ he said.

His voice was so melancholy that I laughed; then I grew grave. ‘No, you must not say that. It may sound dull to you, but—I have my boy. And then, things happen.’

'What things?' he asked incredulously.

'Oh, well—you are happening now.'

'That is wildly eventful, of course. And when I am gone?'

I could not understand the sudden chill that fell upon me, and that seemed to tighten up everything inside me; but I answered as carelessly as I could: 'Oh, something, or somebody else will happen, I dare say.'

'The more I see of women,' said Ralph Keston, 'the more extraordinary I think they are.'

'Is that a compliment to my sex, or a criticism?'

'If it is a criticism, it is of myself. Women often show a man how selfish he is.'

'I am not sure,' I said, 'that women are really more unselfish than men. You see a great many women *like* giving up things; and if you like a thing, there is no unselfishness in doing it.'

'That only proves that their natures are radically less selfish.'

'No, not unless you make self-sacrifice and unselfishness synonymous terms, which they are not.'

'Which they are.'

'Which they may be, but by no means inevitably are. What is called self-sacrifice *may* mean supreme surrender of self, or it may only be the sacrifice of one part of self which is strong to another which is stronger.'

'And the strongest part of a woman's nature——?'

'Is to feel herself necessary, to be first with somebody. Many women will do and put up with a great deal for the sake of feeling that.'

'Is that what you do when you are here alone, evolve a philosophy of your sex?'

'Partly; I have plenty of time, you know. But I have a friend—she is abroad now—but when she was in England we used to discuss things of that kind, and she gave me many of her ideas. She put down everything to the maternal element in woman, but I don't know; I think myself there

my husband.'

I left my companion standing uncrossed the lawn I felt that he was entered the house, I still seemed to look in them they had worn when he :

## CHAPTER XXXVI

'O Love, that fire and darkness should be mix'd,  
Or to thy triumphs such strange tortures fix'd.'

RALPH KESTON stayed a month at the little white house, and during that month I fell in love with him. It was not wonderful ; he was that delightful combination, a man of the world and a man of culture ; he had read and thought and travelled ; he had mixed with all kinds of people, and passed through all kinds of experiences. And I had led a peculiarly limited life ; I had little knowledge either of books or men, and was only beginning to think. It was not wonderful that when he came into my narrow world and showed me a wide one, that when he talked to me upon all sorts of subjects and encouraged me to develop and give out to him my own thoughts and fancies and ideals, that I should be interested as I had never been interested before ; and it was not wonderful that interest should flame up into love. I was a woman of five-and-thirty, with a nature capable of passionate devotion, and I had never been in love yet. As a girl I had had fancies and been sentimentally affected more than once, but I had always been in love with love, never with a man ; and since my loveless marriage, I had lived very much out of the world, and my greatest friends had been of my own sex. I did not know what was happening to me. I knew that I had a sense of exhilaration, unwonted and delightful ; I knew that I lived more keenly than I had ever lived, enjoyed life as I had never yet enjoyed it ; I knew that though in past summers there had been beautiful days, none had ever seemed to me so beautiful as these, when Ralph Keston met me each

my life, or Ella Lillingworth; and looking forward, I did not know that the thing was the thought of what I should do again. So I went on day after day degrading the name of friendship, as many a one has done; for not many women deliberately allow the advent of illicit love to weave to themselves a web of illusion and meshes, perceive the truth too late.

I have said that the days were happy when I hardly knew whether I was happy or not; when, after tea at the White House, I would go into the drawing-room and make music for my friends on the verandah, sometimes whistling or singing, stirring in me emotions that I had never known before; yearnings I knew not after what, glad or sad, pain, pain that was half an ecstasy. I was drawn to what I called the music world, a different part of me from that that appealed to the senses. He played waltzes which brought back the vague entrancing longings of my girlhood so plaintive that the melancholy of the heart strings; he sang songs which

At last the climax came, as it always comes in such cases ; for unless the man goes away in the beginning, he is sure in the end to tell the woman the meaning of his not going. The climax came ; I need not say how it happened. Just a word, a look, and the barriers were down, and naked human nature stood in honoured custom's place. Once before I had seen a man carried away by passion ; then it had repelled and frightened me ; now—— That it was which, in the after realisation, the most roused in me horror of myself, the knowledge that something within me had answered to that strong something in the man, that the sense of his arms about me had been joy, his kisses sweet. Afterwards shame and remorse came and fought a wild battle with love, and slew, not the love, but all my pride, all my confidence in myself, all my trust in my own purity and strength. But at the time I had no thought of pride, no thought of anything, save a great passion of longing ; and in the sudden sweep of that passion I believe I should have done what he asked me to do, I believe I should have gone away with him—if it had not been for Arnold. I forgot everything else ; duty, principles, religion ; that unknown factor in myself cast all I had trusted in to the winds. But Arnold was my guardian angel, then as always, and to him, to the great love I bore him and the thought of his love for me, not from any strength or goodness in myself I owe it, that I did not do what many women have done. So I found the force to send the man I loved—unlawfully, but with a great intensity—to send him away. I found it, but I nearly failed, and now, when it is all past and gone, I still can feel the drag and strain, the wrench and tumult of that last chief struggle, when I nearly lost the battle I thought won. For on the evening of that parting day a longing came upon me, great and keen, to taste once more of Paradise, though hell should follow after. I have a vision of that moonlit wood, and I myself stealing through the trees, a shadow amidst the shadows which the full branches cast upon the ground. 'I shall stay until the morning,' he had said, 'shall wait in case you should relent.' Knowing him

...place that was naturally  
way to the wood. Hardly I was at  
some vague idea I had of making  
and sending in a message that R  
Holt; settled plan I had none.  
him once again, and I would not  
seeing him meant surrender.

Patches of moonlight on the pat  
through the leaves; I see them cle  
exaltation which possessed me as I  
the trees. And all at once I stopped.  
eagerly; but I stopped when I saw hi  
know what stayed my steps and he  
shadow, as in the moonlight he neare  
But somehow into my consciousness  
that that moment was a scale whereir  
that I myself, by sound or silence, di  
weight the balance. I do not know h  
I fought fiercely; the unknown so  
the feeling, longing woman urged me  
within a few yards of me. My heart c  
warrior that battled with it bade me  
divine, that I was so near him, that  
my body and the

entered it, that something that had held me dumb let my lips frame a word: I spoke it aloud: 'Arnold'; and then I went back to Godfrey and his sons.

There began for me then a time of bitter suffering. For months I longed constantly, for years often and often, after that forbidden love, and that in spite of the shame and remorse which wrestled with it. But neither remorse nor shame overthrew it; only time, with slow, persistent steps, trod it at last to dust. When after many years I saw Ralph Keston again, I met him, not without a tremor, for I think no woman ever meets a man she has once cared for altogether unmoved, yet with no stirring of the old feeling. But before time did its work, I paid for the little happiness a heavy penalty of pain, and often in the dull, reproachful days, I longed for a wider life that might bring perhaps forgetfulness, or death that would end the outward monotony and the grinding tumult within. I suffered much; but since those days I have been very glad that it all happened, glad even of my failure and my fall; for otherwise I should never have understood half the temptations, half the sufferings, half the difficulties of women. Probably not, at least, for I have observed that very few people have sufficient imagination to put themselves into situations that they have not personally encountered; the great majority only understand what has come within their actual experience, and condemn or ridicule the dangers they have not known. But the *Sturm und Drang* of my awakened womanhood taught me much. At first I only felt, in a sort of wild bewilderment; but by and by feeling, tempered and controlled, became food for reflection; my mind absorbed my heart's emotions and learned from them many lessons. There followed a period of years during which I thought much. Poets helped me, poets who have touched the springs of human nature and discerned its possibilities; philosophers who have sought the wherefore amidst the tangle of whys; observers of life who have noted its phenomena without attempting to explain them. In the



world of books I came in contact with many minds and many theories ; but I doubt whether they would have lived for me, stimulated me as they did, had not the key of my own experience unlocked the forms of words and revealed the substance within. For it is one thing to accept theories, it is another to realise them ; it is one thing to follow a thought, another to grasp it ; one thing to study, another to learn. And with life as with books. I have known people who have read stirring chapters in the Book of Life and have retained of them only facts, who have run up against tragedies and viewed them as incidents, who have come in contact with an accumulation of premises and drawn from them no conclusions. Suffering, I think, is often the only means, suffering combined with struggle, strong enough to awaken the dull perception, sharpen the vision, open the closed ear ; and many a good woman goes on being simply a good woman, who, did she but feel the fires of temptation, might be a strength and a help to those she now encounters but to condemn. I learned in those years to understand much ; and I became gentler of judgment, broader in sympathy ; though it was not till later that I learned the wider lesson of suspending judgment altogether where, and because, I did not understand.

And it was in that time of tumult and distress that I began the questioning which lasted for eight years. The old, old problems which have hurled themselves against the brains, hearts, and souls of myriads of men, gathered about me now, and I found no answer to them—no answer, at least, that satisfied me. My books, in these particular difficulties, gave me little help ; the philosophers bewildered me, the theologians sent me empty away. The poets alone seemed to offer something that did not crumble or confuse, and to Browning chiefly amongst them, I owed what faith in the goodness and justice of God remained to me through these years. I am glad of it all now, glad of the distress, the humiliation, the doubt, the pain ; glad, not least, of the unlawful love. Because I think that it is better to fall, and learn to aid your fellows through the fall, than to stand unbrokenly upright and know not how to give

a helping hand ; because without that experience, the miserable, the vicious, the reckless, might never have come to me for sympathy, as they since have come ; because, as Tennyson says, it is of our dead selves that we may make stepping-stones, and there are selves that we cannot kill until we first know them to be alive ; and because we are apt to stiffen in our virtues, but may progress through our sins, since it is a harder task to call the righteous than the sinners to repentance.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

'I must outlive a thing ere know it dead.'

I FOUND it a real trial when, in August, Cordelia came to stay a few days at Camp Holt, and told me I was looking pale. It is bad enough to feel wretched, but to be told you are looking so, and to have to try and change your looks, is an added cross laid especially upon the shoulders of women. For men are allowed a greater licence in the matter of complexion and expression, and moreover can be sad without tears, so that their eyes are dumb as to the tales that women's eyes are apt to tell; and then a man has his work or his club, and can, if he lives in the country, always be obliged to go to London on business, and so escape the constant criticism of the family circle. But a woman is under fire all day long, and the deeper her wound, the more unflinching she must fight. I know it was very hard for me those first weeks after Ralph Keston went away. That Godfrey was peculiarly exacting at that time did not matter; it was a sort of relief to my sense of disloyalty to meet the demands he made upon me with unflagging patience and attention. But Bertram and Ellis seemed to have divined in some curious way that I was unhappy, and that my unhappiness had to do with the absence of the late frequent guest at Camp Holt, and they appeared to take a sort of malignant pleasure in the fact that he was gone. Constantly they referred to his visits, asking if he were likely to come again, and where he had gone to; and when I replied, as I always did, that I did not know, they chuckled or grinned, and said they did not like

him, and hoped he would not come back. And I could not silence them, for conscience made me a coward; I could only bear with their questions and remarks as I bore with Godfrey's exacting demands and irritable moods, with a dogged resignation. And on the top of it all came Cordelia, remarking that I looked pale.

'You should take more exercise, Anna,' she said, 'or you will get to look dreadfully middle-aged. I should not wonder,' eyeing me reflectively, 'if you were to lose your figure.'

'Am I growing stout?' I asked, striving after jocularly of tone.

But Cordelia was never jocular; she was what she called candid. 'No, angular,' she replied. 'You are quite losing that rather pretty curve you used to have above the waist.'

'How is Claude?' I asked, to change the conversation.

'Oh, *very* well, and doing so splendidly at school. He brought home two prizes last term. Is Arnold clever?'

Now, Arnold had never brought home a prize yet. In my secret heart I thought him clever, much cleverer than Claude, but I could not say so; as I had no tangible proof to back me up, it would have been useless even to say that he had abilities, when talking to a woman whose son had laid the concrete results of his brains on the drawing-room table. So I murmured something about the masters saying he was intelligent, but not a very good worker. 'He does well at games,' I ended, with a feeble attempt to rival Cordelia's tone when she spoke of the prizes.

'Ah, I dare say,' she replied, and somehow I felt as completely crushed as if she had spoken in more positive disapproval. There was a pause, during which Cordelia was absorbed in art needlework, and then she said:

'Oh, by the way, I hear Ralph Keston's sister is living near here.'

'Yes,' I said, trying hard to make that treacherous voice of mine sound ordinary. I could command my face, but it has always been hard to me to keep my feelings out of my

voice. It was my voice which had betrayed me to Ralph, and brought about those few minutes that I longed after and abhorred; it was my voice that I distrusted now. 'Yes. Do you know her?'

'Very slightly; she is not the sort of person whose acquaintance I care for, and I have always avoided her. *You*, perhaps, would like her?'

'She seems very pleasant,' I said.

'I suppose her brother has not been down to see her. I should think he was neglectful in family matters.'

'Yes. Would you mind if I were to open another window? It is so hot this morning.' I rose from my seat. 'Yes, he came down.'

'No, my dear Anna, I am sorry to say that I must beg you *not* to open any more windows. I am in a draught as it is. That door does not shut as close as it ought to.'

'Shall I shut them all? How has your throat been lately, Cordelia?' Anything to draw the conversation away from Ralph Keston.

'Pretty well; it depends so much on my general health, you know. Did you see Ralph when he was down?'

'Yes, I saw him at his sister's; and then he—he called.'

'Did he really? That was very polite of him. But he knows you are my sister.'

'Oh yes, he knows that.'

'I suppose he did not stay long? Which of these greens do you think look best together? The peacock and the grass-green? or would you put one of these with the peacock?'

'Oh, I think this one; I don't think the grass shade would tone in so well. What a lot of different colours you have, Cordelia! It is quite wonderful how you vary them. This blue is lovely, and that pink! Is it a cushion or a chair back?'

'It is a table-cover for that little table near the drawing-room fireplace. I did not think you took any interest in work.'

'Oh yes, I do. I can't do it myself, but when it is well done, it is charming. You must have a great deal of it in your house, you do so much. It requires great skill and practice, I am sure.'

'And a good eye,' said Cordelia. 'Let me see, what were we talking about? Oh, Ralph Keston. He only stayed a day or two, I think you said; so it was all the more polite of him to call.'

'It was longer than that. It was—it must have been about—about a month.'

Cordelia put down her work. 'A month? How extraordinary! Whatever did he do it for?'

'I think he thought Mrs. St. Clair was dull all alone.'

'It's *most* extraordinary, asked about and run after as he is. Whatever did he do with himself?'

I told the accepted lie. 'I don't know,' I said.

'Dear me! Did he come here more than once, then? Did he see Godfrey?'

'No, Godfrey will not see anybody now. Will you excuse me, Cordelia? I think I must go and see if he wants me.'

I escaped for the time; but again and again Cordelia returned to the subject of Ralph, his prolonged stay with his sister, his attractions and shortcomings. Oh, I was glad when she went! Life was drab and desolate enough just then, but the days alone were peace compared with the days of that visit; and, though my stepsons were tiresome and jarring, they were nothing to Cordelia. Unconsciously cruel she was, I know, but she stabbed nevertheless; and I knew, too, that had she been aware of the truth, the stabs would have been deliberate. If Judy had been in England, I think I might have found some comfort, some relief in talking, or even in writing to her; but Judy was far away, in sympathy as in space, it seemed; I felt that I was out of touch with her, and the few letters I wrote her now dealt only with ordinary outside events. It was Arnold who was my safeguard and my refuge during those first weeks of misery, and while his holidays lasted I was able to stem the flood of

depression that bore down upon me. I had always loved him ; from the hour of his birth, yes, and before it, his well-being and happiness had been the chief aim and interest of my life. Now all the force of my nature was concentrated into that one channel ; all the love that might have been a husband's, all the passion, all the devotion of which I was capable, were given to him. It was the strength of that love which saved me then, and afterwards almost slew me.

The autumn and the winter came and went ; with the spring, life took on some interest ; for Judy returned to me. How well I remember the morning her letter came, the thin foreign letter, with the few abrupt lines. It told me simply that her husband was dead, and that she was coming home. 'And I want to see you. Ask Godfrey to let me come for a few days to Camp Holt ; I know you cannot leave him.' All my old affection sprang up again ; she was in trouble and wanted me. What mattered the cold years of parting ? I forgot the short letters and the long intervals between them ; I longed only to see her again, to comfort her a little if I could. She had named no day for her arrival ; and this, Godfrey said, was very inconsiderate. I knew that she could not help it, that she could not foretell the date on which her ship would reach England ; but it was of no use to say that to Godfrey ; that Judy was inconsiderate was one of his rooted ideas ; and, as he grew feebler, I found it better to leave those ideas uncombated. It was not so difficult now ; for, besides the fact that his helplessness appealed to me, I felt that I owed him much in reparation as well as in gratitude, and was glad to make his life as happy as I could.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

'Lest much of the stuff that is called romance  
Should crumble and show too plain, perchance,  
What often stands for love.'

It was in May that Judy's telegram came. 'In London. May I come?' The next day I went to the station to meet her; such a changed Judy! The little imperious way was gone; she was quiet and subdued; her eyes, I thought, had a harder look. All the way home she spoke of her voyage and her journey, never once of her trouble; but, as we neared the house, she said: 'When can I have a talk with you—a long talk?'

'From five till half-past six I am free.'

She shook her head. 'And the evening?'

'Godfrey goes to bed at ten. After that I have the whole night to myself.'

'Ah, then we will wait till bedtime. Oh—is that Bertram?' There was a little return of her old manner. 'He hasn't improved, Annie.'

'Did you expect he would?'

'Hardly. Yet it seems odd to find everything and everybody just the same. I believe you are the only person who has changed at all.'

'I?' I exclaimed.

'Yes; I feared it would come, you know.'

Then the carriage drew up; Burge, who was always remarkable for delicate shades of manner, opened the door with an air which expressed deferential welcome tempered with



respectful condolence; and Bertram, having taken off his hat, fled round a corner.

All through dinner, Judy, composed and self-possessed, talked to Godfrey, telling him the things in her life of the past few years which she thought would interest him; and in the evening she played with Bertram and Ellis, while I read to my husband till he fell asleep. We did not speak to each other, but her very presence in the room was a strength and a comfort to me. Oh, those evenings! The sameness, the gray, monotonous march of them, one after the other, Ralph behind and nothing in front! And the mere physical weariness and constraint seemed so much worse now than they used to be. Every night, almost, I was attacked by the fidgets, and longed to stamp and tear about the room; now and again I managed to bury myself in a book; but generally my stepsons refused to leave me in peace, and it was better, on the whole, to play with them than to listen to their constant altercations, and to run the risk of a quarrel which would wake up Godfrey into peevish displeasure. But Judy changed the atmosphere; there was somebody akin to me, I felt, in the room; I had a sense of real, though mute companionship, and time trod less lamely than its wont.

When I went into Judy's room that night and found her sitting in her dressing-gown by the fire, for it was a cold spring that year, and the evenings were chilly, I could not help thinking of that other night, when she had sat just so and talked with gay confidence of the handcuffs of marriage which were to be put upon her on the morrow. And now it was all over! Yet, as I stood within the door, I envied her; she had drunk for five years of the cup of happiness and love, while I, with transgressing lips, had barely touched the brim.

She turned and held out a hand. 'Come and sit down.'

'Judy,' I said, coming close to her, 'I must tell you how——'

She interrupted me with something of the old imperious way. 'No, don't tell me anything; don't, above all this'

condole with me, until you have heard what I have to say. Anti-climaxes are so absurd.'

I took the chair near her and waited. She sat with her legs crossed, her elbow on the raised knee, one hand supporting her chin, in the attitude I knew so well—the attitude she had almost invariably fallen into—in the old London days, when, pausing in her walk and her denunciations, she had condescended to a seat.

'I wonder if many women,' she said presently, speaking apparently to the fire and not at all to me, 'I wonder if many women have been twice married and twice been left a widow, and each time been mightily glad of their widowhood!'

'Glad? Oh Judy!' I exclaimed. 'Glad?'

'When poor Tom died it was only a sort of relief, and for some time I tried to pretend to myself that I was very sorry. But this time—it meant salvation.'

'Oh Judy!' I said again. 'You cannot mean——?'

'I mean that if it had gone on, I should have become wicked or mad. I wonder,' she put in with the old reflective air, 'which would be the worst?'

I seemed to be able to say nothing but 'Oh Judy!' and I said it now for the third time.

'Yes,' she continued, 'that's so.' She turned her face towards me. 'You know how I loved him.'

'Yes; and then, after you were married, you found you——'

'No, I didn't. I went on loving him. *That* was the dreadful part.'

'But how? Why dreadful?'

'Because it is a degradation to love some men.'

'Was he—did he treat you badly?'

'He did not beat me—actually beat me, if that is what you mean. He did everything else that a man well can do. He neglected me, he put me to open shame, he trampled upon every feeling that I had of pride and delicacy and self-respect!'

'Oh Judy! and I thought you so happy; so happy that you had forgotten me.'

'No, I never forgot. But I could not write. If I had seen

could so well play the lover. I b  
that, and has nothing—necessaril  
with love.'

'But he *was* devoted to you, Jud

'In *his* way, yes; but it passed, c  
thing, when there is nothing undern  
It began with indifference, neglect, a  
to me was most sacred, of all that to  
then came the others.'

'I almost wonder that you, with  
not leave him.'

'Ah, that was what I wondered—  
under. But I could not. I told yo  
well, I did, loved him and loathed hin  
can understand such a combination.'

'I hardly know,' I said slowly, for  
what she had spoken of, 'whether it v  
than the loathing without the love.'

'Then I can tell you; it is worse  
higher part of me revolted against hin  
at his feet. Do you remember my say  
ever he was, if he whistled to me, I  
a dog?'

'I don't think all women are,' I said. I was thinking of Cordelia.

'Oh, there are women, of course,' said Judy in her old sweeping way, 'who are not women at all; self-sufficing and self-contained; I don't count those. But the others—those especially who are *plus femmes que les autres*? Pride has nothing to do with it; the proudest women are sometimes the feeblest inside, though they may hide their weakness. I did not show it much; but I could not bring myself to leave him.'

'You said once,' I suggested, 'that it was the maternal element.'

Judy shook her head. 'No, there is something more, something besides that. Though I was right up to a point. There *is* something of that in a woman's love; especially if the man is a bad man.'

'And you said—it was the same day, I think—that even the worst men had always something of the child in them.'

'That's true, too; even Basil—sometimes I used to go in and look at him when he was asleep. He looked quite good then, in spite of the lines, and I felt good when I looked at him. Sometimes I did it to keep myself so; sometimes because of that other thing we were speaking of, the maternal element. No, it never quite died out, any more than the child did quite in him. Even when he was awake, at times—no, they never altogether lose the simplicity.'

'And yet I don't see how you could be glad, actually, when he died.'

'Yes, for there was no salvation for him while he lived, or for me.'

'But after death, Judy, surely—if he did not repent——'

'That he certainly did not do, there was no time for it; his illness was too short and quick, and he was unconscious the greater part of the time and almost up to the end. But I don't believe in that, in the doctrine of damnation and punishment; I can't, not after seeing him. If his soul had any consciousness when it left that beautiful vile body of his, it saw nothing to dread before it. He died so quietly, and his face

afterwards—all the lines went out of it, the lines that meant the things I hated, and left it—well, as I should have wished it to be.’

‘That might only mean that it was the soul which was vile and not the body,’ I thought, but did not speak the thought aloud.

But Judy seemed to guess something of what was in my mind. ‘I know it is not logical reasoning,’ she said. ‘But I *feel* it, and I felt it strongly as I stood there and looked at him, that probation does not end here; this little life does not decide the whole of eternity.’

‘It would seem hardly fair if it did,’ I said.

‘It would be ridiculous,’ said Judy in her decided way. She was silent a moment; then turned to me again. ‘And you?’ she said.

‘I? Oh, nothing changes much at Camp Holt.’

‘You have changed, though; something has happened to you. I suppose,’ she said, half in assertion, half questioningly, ‘that it’s a man.’

Then I told her. I had thought at first that I would never tell her, that I could not speak of it to anybody; but when I had once started, the relief of words was great, and Judy’s way of listening made it easy to find them. When I stopped, she said:

‘I supposed it would have to happen, it generally happens—once, at any rate. I had a sort of hope that you might have escaped, and yet I do not know that I am exactly sorry. If nothing had happened to you, you would probably never have gone on.’

‘What to?’ I asked.

‘To—upon my word, I don’t quite know. I have always had an idea that one was moving towards something, but if I come to think of it, I don’t know that I have made much progress of any kind during the last ten years. Yet there must be something—some sort of wider, better condition that experience and suffering bring one to. Perhaps it is only a greater tolerance.’

'Or indifference,' said I, for I was in a pessimistic phase at that time.

'No, *not* indifference.' I seemed to see the old Judy again, as she rose, put her hands behind her back, and began to walk to and fro. 'I deny it emphatically. The sluggard is *not* made by too much feeling, but by too little. You may be stunned; misfortune may descend in the form of a sledgehammer and knock you silly for a time; but the dulled thing is a physical thing, brain or nervous system, something *through* which you feel; when you come to again, you yourself are more sensitive, more impressionable; though less foolishly so, perhaps, than you were before. Personally I have never been stunned; through anything that I have suffered, I have always been conscious enough to writhe about like an eel all the time. But I know that it must be so, that pain must develop, not destroy.'

'You always know, Judy,' I said, the old desire to tease her rising in me in spite of our joint tendency towards low spirits.

'And you always mock and always will mock at the things I feel most sure about. Do you know it is one o'clock?' There is knowledge that I can find evidence for,' and she held her watch before my eyes.

That visit of Judy's, just the two or three days she spent at Camp Holt, stimulated and strengthened me; it roused me from the apathy into which I had fallen, and it was in consequence of it that I first began to interest myself in written thoughts and ideas and found my own ideas and thoughts rising in response to, or in challenge of them. Yet in spite of all I puzzled and wondered over, my chief interest throughout those years was centred always in Arnold, the great motive power of my life was my love of him. As he grew older, the bond between us became ever more firmly cemented, our companionship closer. His holidays were my delight; I left my books, my theories, my wonderings, to give myself wholly to the joy of sharing his pursuits and pleasures when I could, of furthering when I could not share them. At sixteen he was taller than I was, and I used to make out that I was tired

and feeble and growing an old woman for the sake of the enjoyment of leaning on the arm of my big son. When he left Winchester and went up to Oxford, he seemed to me, with his keen face, the mouth that always made me feel so tender towards him, his easy figure, and happy ways, just what budding manhood ought to be ; and he seemed almost a man and yet at the same time the baby I had nursed, the child that had clung to my skirts. Soon he had a place in his college boat ; I pictured him taking part in the inter-university race, and set myself to learn boating terms and slang. He never worked very much, just enough, at college as at school, to get along respectably ; but his tastes lay in the direction of all that most appealed to me, and often on summer evenings or by the winter fire, my mind sharpened itself against his, or unfolded itself in a communion of thought and taste which I had dreamed of but never known till now.

Besides recollections in which Arnold has a part, the things which stand out most clearly in those years are the occasional visits Judy paid to Camp Holt, and the intercourse, slight and broken though it was, that I had with Sir Reginald.

Almost the only event which caused any excitement at Camp Holt during that uneventful time was the destruction of poor Ellis's collection, and that was of such tragic interest that it lasted for many a day. It arose, as so many tragedies arose, out of Bertram's good intentions. It appeared that a retriever puppy had gone lame, or that Bertram had imagined it was lame, and had bandaged its foreleg, and left it in invalid quiescence on the schoolroom hearthrug, while he and Ellis took the other dogs for a walk. The puppy, I suppose, had tired of repose and sought what amusement his surroundings might afford, with results highly disastrous to the tablecloth, two cushions, several books, and Ellis's collection. On my way from Godfrey's library to the drawing-room, I heard violent sounds of scuffling, loud voices, and imprecations going on in the schoolroom, and thought I had better go and see what was the matter. As soon as I opened the door, I saw that it was something serious. Books, table-cover, cushions, stuffing, lay upon the floor, with broken glass and a

wooden case, all liberally besprinkled with butterflies and beetles; and crouched amidst the ruins was the puppy, with that expression of repentant guilt which dogs know so well how to assume; protected so far by the clumsy person and ungainly antics of Bertram, while Ellis sought to slay it with the poker.

'Boys, boys!' I cried, for so I still called them, though they were middle-aged men, both of them.

'I'll kill him,' cried Ellis; 'I swear I will.'

'Oh Ellis,' I said, 'do put down the poker! Here, give it to me and tell me what is the matter.'

'It's that blasted puppy. And Bertram—it's all his fault.'

'It w-wasn't,' said Bertram. 'He was lame, and you can't move if you're lame.'

'But he did move. Look there! By —, he shan't do it again,' and Ellis made a dive at the poker which I had secured.

'No, you shan't, you shan't touch him,' Bertram cried, and backing to protect his patient, fell full length amongst the remnants on the floor.

'And now he's squashed them worse,' said Ellis. 'I won't stand it, I'm d——d if I will.'

'And I'm d——d if you touch Squawker,' retorted Bertram.

I thought the best thing I could do was to remove Squawker, and accordingly seized him by the collar, dragged him out of the room, and shut the door. It was not easy to pacify the combatants. Bertram's temper was not improved by the fact that he had cut his hand on a bit of broken glass, and Ellis was furious at being deprived both of the poker and his victim. It took me a long time to restore calm, but I was aided by the arrival of James with the tea-tray; and fortunately the brothers were always hungry.

There is a second collection now, but it was some time before poor Ellis found heart to start it. He began again, however, after Arnold presented him with a new case with a splendid plate-glass cover to it. I remember well the day when he started afresh, because Bertram, wishful, as always, to aid the great work, stumbled and fell in the stone passage by the kitchen in ill-advised efforts to capture a cockroach.



## CHAPTER XXXIX

'But dead ! All's done with : wait who may,  
Watch and wear and wonder who will.  
Oh my whole life that ends to-day !  
Oh my soul's sentence, sounding still !'

I REMEMBER when I was a young girl hearing a friend of father's say that the sorrows of life led on one to the other, that each trial endured seemed but a preparation for the next, that lesser degrees of suffering preceded a culminating grief. The saying always remained in my memory, but each time that I was unhappy I thought that life could hold no worse pain ; until the time that I must write of now, and then I knew positively that I had touched the very quick of suffering, and that never again could sorrow meet me in so complete a form.

I come now in the story of my life to that space of blackness which lies like a great gulf in the course of it, dividing it into two separate halves, distinct in every way ; for since I crossed it, nothing in all the world has ever been or can be again the same as it was before. I must glance at that sorrow, but I cannot dwell upon it ; even now, when the bitterness is past. What is meant by getting over a grief ? Not forgetfulness, for that which is cut into the heart can never pass from the memory ; and in recollection sorrow must continually be born anew, however completely the tide of life may hide its presence in the swirl of events.

Again the year was in its infancy ; wistful skies and lengthening days bade the world prepare for the stirring of spring. A letter came from Oxford ; not in Arnold's hand-

writing ; he was ill, it said. I left Godfrey, and Godfrey was willing that I should leave him, and I went to Oxford.

I must tell the end of that sorrow almost before I tell the beginning : Arnold died. I cannot speak of the weeks I watched beside him, of the presage of evil which told me what would be, of the nights that dawned into anxious days, of the days that died into nights of halting suspense. Hope fled from me and sat afar off, almost hid, yet dimly perceptible, mocking me at a distance with sweet, false visions of a day-spring of joy after the blackness of dread. Mockery indeed, for the end of it all I have said. And when that end came, I would not leave him ; I stayed by him every moment that I was not dragged away to sit before untasted food, or drugged into fictitious sleep. I stayed beside him looking at his face until that face was hid, and then still my place was by that which held him, till it too was taken away from my sight and touch.

The time that followed is dim where consciousness met the outer world, sharply clear in that inner region where pain worked unopposed. I suppose I looked and spoke and acted much as I had done before, for I have an impression that people said I was bearing up wonderfully. Often and often I have heard that expression used since, and never without a pang of the heart and a wondering whether the inner selves of those of whom it was said were wandering, as I had wandered, through waste places of a blank desolation. I went back to Camp Holt, and I did for Godfrey all I had been used to do ; but I did it with a part of myself that was not the real me ; and when I was not with him, I sat motionless, doing nothing, feeling, it seemed to me, nothing, just sat in the room that had been Arnold's and wondered if in truth I minded that he was dead. Sometimes into this stagnant calm there broke wild storms that rent me with their force, leaving me at last to a blessed exhaustion which was my nearest approach to peace. I know now that I was not quite sane at that time, for horrible fancies came into my mind ; that I had killed him, had wished for his death and brought it about because I had failed to pray with sufficient fervour

for his recovery; and there was one night when, I know, reason broke down beneath the weight of pain. Many miracles I have heard of and disbelieved, but what befell me that night I never can account for outside the realm of miracle; for by all the laws of the action of drugs, when the next morning dawned I never should have waked into this world, yet did so wake, with hardly a trace of what I had passed through. Before that night I had had always about me a dim hope of death; after it, I knew that I was meant to live; and with the knowledge came a sense of shrinking dread. For I knew that by and by I should have to gird up my loins and take upon myself the burden and the consciousness of actual life. Already I seemed to feel the tingling of renewed sensation, the darting pain that runs through a deadened limb when the circulation begins to flow anew; already I felt the inevitable pressure of daily existence.

I cannot attempt to describe what I passed through at that time; I touched the core of grief, and it left upon me a mark which never can be wiped out. Those who have walked in the valley of the shadow of life will know what I mean; we speak the same tongue; and they alone; for the language of suffering has no dictionary.

## CHAPTER XL

'Love's saving memory  
Hath interposed 'twixt ruin and my soul.'

HAVING sounded the depths of tribulation, I stood upon the brink of nothingness ; God was not, and all the beliefs that I thought I had held were broken and gone. For many years I had speculated and wondered, revolting sometimes at what seemed to me the rank injustice that rioted through the world, puzzling over the incongruity of facts with the idea of love in the Power that permitted them. Now, not reason alone, but feeling, not the mind only, but the whole of my being, arose and beat against the fabric of conventional faith, and, so beating, shattered it. I remember that of all the cold comfort people offered me in those days, that which most jarred upon, fretted, and repelled me, was the assertion that what had befallen me was the will of God. With passionate inward protest I met it : it could not be ; or, if it were, God was a fiend, who planted the seeds of love in the human heart but to smite and wound it when those seeds should have bloomed. I have said that that was the assertion which most moved me to revolt ; but I am wrong ; there was another which still more surely roused me to rebellion, and that was the pronouncement that what had happened was to my advantage, for my highest good. That Arnold should be slain in order to promote my moral improvement ; that his life, young, promising, and unfulfilled, should be destroyed that mine might be devoted to a better end ; that his soul, not irreligious, but emphatically unreligious, set towards the interests and amusements, the hopes and ambitions of enthusiastic but

German in its appeal to selfish i  
very nature of love. I did not a  
mere fact that it could be sugges  
was abhorrent to the whole nature  
who would willingly have given no  
my soul to save his, to be told as  
to further my gain ! If that were c  
grieved ? If that way lay resigna  
name for disloyalty. Through all th  
Arnold's death, there was only one  
amidst the tempest of suffering, as  
felt, amidst the fading of all else,  
being ; from my own experience I  
impatient anger from aught that im  
And as I abjured that which slande  
ever seemed to give its being scop  
anything so positive as disbelief cou  
to hold the chaos of my mind, most  
there stood out in my consciousness  
years before by Sir Reginald Creagh  
helped or hindered by the thoughts  
actually accept the theory as a truth  
as a possibility, and influenced me

my beloved distress was the only thought that held any sweetness for me in those days, and in my worst moments I said : 'He shall not know.'

In a way Godfrey was nothing to me at that time, preserving the strange nonentity which embraced everybody, seeming only as one of the shadows which alone peopled the world ; and yet, in a curious way, he was everything, since his needs formed my only occupation. For a year and a half I devoted myself exclusively to him, and in my devotion found a certain peace. And somehow, though my heart seemed dead, I had never cared for him as I cared for him now ; perhaps because he had grown very helpless and depended on me more and more ; perhaps because he so sorely grieved. A common sorrow made a bond between us that never had existed yet : we did not speak of the sorrow, for I could not speak of it ; but the bond was there. I always think that my care of him was my salvation ; by means of it I was obliged to act, and obliged, too, to think in a way that was not brooding. My poor husband was often irritable, often impatient, but I did not seem to mind as I had minded in former days ; everything about me, my feelings and perceptions, everything was dulled ; the long, monotonous days did not irk me as before, and the sunshine and the summer no longer stirred in me the desire for enjoyment, action, and events. Then, too, I knew that Godfrey was in almost constant suffering, and though I felt hard towards God and life as He permitted it to be, I was tender towards suffering in every form ; the one thing I cared to do was to try and ease pain, the manifold pain that God did not heed.

During the winter that followed Arnold's death, Judy came twice to Camp Holt, and her presence was comforting—I think, because she never tried to comfort me. In the rare hours during which I was free to leave Godfrey, she would sit silent or talk, according to the mood I was in, and she never made a mistake. I had no need, in her company, to exert myself or to pretend ; it was unnecessary to 'bear up' with Judy, and her gentle companionship—for she was very

I should ruin my complexion if  
and eat more. God knew best  
driving in a closed carriage was  
a woman of my age. It was quite  
she allowed, but after nearly a year  
to send out cards, so as not to draw  
the county.

'If Claude were to die, Cordelia  
to expect an answer to this last card  
would care much about your position.

Cordelia hesitated, which was  
Cordelia, and then replied that she  
be given strength to do her duty.  
perturbed, and presently remarked  
troubles besides death. Poor Claude  
early manhood, sowed some very  
brought more than one line into his  
I did not know anything about that  
perhaps the thought that she was in  
more effect in rousing me than he  
It was an unfortunate thing about Claude  
always so glad when they were over  
the train that January day. the same

but each time my eyes rested upon them, a pang went through my heart, and the thought would come: 'Why was he taken, and these left?' I used to think they had forgotten him, and that, too, hurt me; but when Arnold's dog, the one Bertram had deprived of his tail, died that winter of old age, I found that I was wrong; for the brothers wanted to bury him in Arnold's grave, because, they said, the two would like to be together, and were with difficulty dissuaded from an attempt to carry out their plan.

All through the next summer Godfrey failed, and often I watched beside him the greater part of the night. It was on one of those nights of watching that a curious experience befell me. Godfrey had fallen asleep after hours of restless pain; I did not like to leave him and go to bed, but I thought I would fetch a book from the drawing-room to wile away the slow hours of the night. I lighted a candle and went downstairs. I had no feeling of nervousness, for my timidity seemed to have disappeared in those days, swallowed up in the haunting longing that was paramount in my consciousness. Without any fear, then, I descended the staircase, crossed the hall, and went straight to the drawing-room. I opened the door and went in. And lo! the room was strange. Each object that I knew was there in its accustomed place; everything was just as I had left it a few hours before; and yet all was different; the atmosphere was changed—that is the only way I can describe the difference. And there was a sense of expectancy, a sense of transition, a sense as of finer elements; it was as though the grosser part of substance had been swept away from all these substantial things, and I looked, as it were, upon their prototypes. I seemed to stand upon the threshold of another world, and I felt that it was within my choice to enter that world or no: before it was still the veil—the veil of matter as I knew it; but the veil moved and fluttered; I had but to consent and it would lift. And if it lifted, I knew I should see a far fuller world, a world in which there were no empty spaces, but all space filled with life; and something within me seemed to



I knew that if I dared to confront  
overpowered by terror, of being s  
marks that reason laid down, of l  
values in the physical world. Th  
moment, the desire for knowledge  
ness which forbade it; then, with al  
consent. 'No,' I said, 'no'; and in  
atmosphere was gone; the room w  
But with that return to normal co  
dread. I would not quite yield to i  
the book I sought from the tabl  
quickly as I could move without r  
run, lest the terror should overpove  
that night before I again went downs  
had gone to bed.

All through the summer, Godfrey  
Towards autumn there came an eve  
day of suffering, he sank into calm  
when bedtime came, I went to him  
content to leave him to the nurse's c  
let me go.

'No, stay with me to-night.'

'But you are better' I said. 'I am'

was gone. Cordelia said it was a happy release, and that I would get better now that I was free ; but Cordelia did not know that bondage sometimes means salvation. Free I was indeed—or thought myself so ; with the lonely freedom of the woman who has no ties.

## CHAPTER XLI

'Then, welcome each rebuff  
That turns earth's smoothness rough,  
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go !  
Be our joy three parts pain !  
Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;  
Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never grudge the throe.'

As I look back upon my life, it seems strangely uneventful, taking its course through long periods of outwardly monotonous days, with here and there a break or an upheaval. 'There will be few events,' the Oxford fortune-teller had said, and said truly ; and truly too had added, 'but many happenings' ; for to me, the real inward me, the sparse events had rich results ; I moved, though the days stood still. An immense deal had happened to me in those twenty-two years of marriage ; uneventful as they would have appeared to an onlooker's eyes, they were thickly strewn with experiences, through which the woman of forty-three had travelled a long way from the standpoint of the girl who had been so pleased to be called *Madame* when she went abroad on her wedding trip. The years which followed my husband's death could hardly be called eventful, any more than those which preceded it, for nothing unusual occurred in them, though much happened of vital importance to my real, that is to say, my inner, life. And yet, even in the ordinary outer sense, the two first years of my widowhood held more of incident than their foregoers ; for during their course I lived away from Camp Holt. Judy, the doctors, Cordelia, nay, all my sisters, united in advising me to go away, and my own inclinations

went with their counsel. After the first shock of Godfrey's death was over, there succeeded to the stagnation in which I had long been plunged, a desire for change and movement, and when it was suggested to me that I should go to London for a time, or travel abroad, I found the suggestion welcome; if life must go on, better to fill it as full as it would hold. But at first I did not know what to do with my stepsons; some plan of life must be arranged for them, but I felt that I could decide nothing till their mother's brother, who was their guardian and was then engaged upon a tour round the world, should be back again. An aunt, however, an unmarried sister of Godfrey's, was willing to take up her residence at Camp Holt for a time, and to look after them; and thus I found myself free to do as I would.

I went first abroad, to Italy. Judy could not go with me, but she promised to meet me later on; so I had a month alone. I spent that month in Florence, in its streets and picture-galleries, and at a window looking into a broad piazza. It seemed as if my mind awoke in those days. I had thought only with my feelings, if so I may express myself, during those past eighteen months; my intellect had been dulled. Now my brain became active, and reason set to work to consider what emotion had put forward. I seemed to think all through the length of those quiet days, as I walked the streets or stood before the wonders of mediæval art, or sat looking out upon the Italian forms and faces in the street; and I formulated then the conclusions towards which my mind had been tending through many past years. The end was that I gave up all that, in spite of my rebelling heart and doubting head, I had tried half unconsciously to keep; I gave up the religion I had been trained in. The negative unbelief that had gradually permeated my mind became positive; I renounced deliberately the orthodox beliefs. Not without pain; I clung as long as I could to the faith of my early days; but, thought once logically started, the result with a nature like mine was inevitable. I believe there are people, many people, who can thrust doubts aside and go on believing

unthinkable for most people ; there  
Cause, or the Unknowable, something  
capital letter, in every man's mind  
been shown to me, was more of a burden  
turned from His altar ; Christianity  
Christianity, as I had been taught  
tendencies, and I cast it from me. For  
one period of the world's history in  
miraculous character, and for ever  
world to disbelieve and abhor anything  
despite all evidence, however apparent  
attested it. It told me that the human  
destined for another world than this  
supernatural one, the only true happiness  
was to be found ; and then that anywhere  
the supernatural, any awakening of  
in man was in one's own case imagination  
experiences in the cases of others was  
that God was a spirit and must be worshipped  
bound me down to a particular letter  
interpretation of that letter. The Roman  
was more spiritual in its conceptions  
than Christianity, though its symbolism

I could neither accept nor smooth away the contradictions which reflection presented to me. Miracle must be possible at all times, or not possible at all; and, if possible, must be in conformity to a larger law, not in defiance of a smaller one, since God could not find it necessary to a revelation of Himself to break through His own decrees. And if beyond this world lay reality, if spirit were more potent than matter, man must, as he evolved, become more, not less, capable of contacting the finer side of being; should approach, not disclaim, that region of his nature called the supernatural. As to the efficacy of any particular belief, I had been long persuaded that God must be greater than man's thought of Him. Not what a man believed, but what he aimed at, must be of the first importance; the goal might be one, but the ways of reaching it could not but be many. And this made the thought of the millions outside, and preceding Christianity, an impassible stumbling-block in the way of orthodox belief. That Christianity was a great faith, springing from a great Founder, I saw no cause, and was very far from any wish, to deny; but that God should have revealed Himself only so late in the history of the world, and to so small a portion of it, if by means of that revelation alone salvation was possible, was to me an untenable idea; to make multitudes in order to redeem a possible few was a scheme inconceivable by divinity. Nor could I see why the Jewish faith, alone of all the non-Christian faiths, should be accepted by Christians as true and God-given; since in the great world religions I found conceptions loftier, ideas of divinity diviner, than those of the Jews; ethics on a level with Christianity itself, and outstripping the Jewish standard. In the Psalms of David I read: 'I have pursued mine enemies and overtaken them; neither did I turn again till they were consumed. I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle; thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me.' And in

Hindu Scriptures I read: 'He who  
being, friendly and showing mercy .  
friend and foe, and also in fame and i  
by praise or reproach, silent, who  
cometh, homeless, firm in mind, My  
dear to me.' And in the Sikh writing  
renounced, the most to be renounce  
avarice. Delay not in good; delay i  
thy own good, then do good, and let t

I could not doubt, in reading such  
teachings bore the closer resemblanc  
Christ; and when I read the words of  
have which are not of this fold,' it s  
folds of the so-called heathen teach  
removed from that of the Christian Ma

Truth, I knew, there must be, scat  
grains throughout the creeds of the w  
one vein of gold; but in orthodoxy I  
set myself to seek it elsewhere.

A certain peace, a certain joy of fr  
definite resolve; the agnostic position  
satisfy, though I could not be content t  
me at least from bondage. Intent on

## CHAPTER XLII

' My soul a pilgrim was in search of thine.'

AFTER Judy's arrival, we did not stay long in Florence, but moved on to Rome, and settled ourselves in the Hotel de l'Europe, in the Piazza di Spagna, for a month. Judy knew the city, and piloted me through the wonders of it; but we did not surfeit ourselves with sight-seeing. The tourist spirit is alien to me, and I cannot understand how people can let themselves be led about by couriers or guides to gaze at so many churches, so many pictures, so many palaces a day, and imagine that they are enjoying what they see. I could not do my sight-seeing in such a wholesale way, and much that is visited by most people remained unseen by me. But I have a few clear pictures in my memory that I think will never fade; some of the treasures of Rome are mine for evermore. The sculpture of the Vatican; certain pictures in the Borghese Palace; the vastness of St. Peter's; the after-glow splendour of the Colosseum and the Baths of the Emperors; the glory of sunsets seen from the Pincian Hill; the strange, rolling, yesterday beauty of the Campagna; all these I can summon at any moment to my vision, and look upon as long as I will.

Judy had many friends in Rome, and went about, to a certain extent, in society. I could not, of course, go with her; and I was particularly anxious, during the year that followed Godfrey's death, to do nothing contrary to conventional custom. I had been sorry when he died, and for a time more than ever lonely; but I could not pretend that his loss was an abiding sorrow, so was all the more anxious



40. For Arnold I had worn but slight  
that Cordelia had been moved to remove  
my crape was measured by the dressmaker.

Yet, in spite of the retired life I lived  
of Judy's friends whom I saw sometimes  
one of them I saw more than the others  
about a fortnight after our arrival, Judy  
party more than usually animated; for, of  
of her second marriage lay upon her day.

'Whom do you think I met to-night?

'The Pope?'

'Don't be absurd. Philip de Montad

'Very interesting. But who is he?'

'He is a remarkable person.'

'Interesting again; but a little indefinite

'I am sure you would like him.'

'I should like to know who he is.'

'I have asked him to come here.'

'You like him yourself, then?'

'I think you lead too solitary a life.'

'Is Mr.—Signor—Monsieur—of what

'I *think* you would get on with him.'

'Is he an Italian?'

his mother an Englishwoman. He is, I should say, more English than anything else; he was brought up chiefly in England, and went to English schools; but whatever country I have met him in, he has always seemed as if he might belong to that country. I have never met him in Ireland, to be sure; and yet I believe he is capable of adopting a brogue and a shillelagh and the wine of the country.'

'Is he an actor, then? because——'

'No, a cosmopolitan.'

'Does he do anything?'

'I told you; he is a Remarkable Person.'

'That's hardly a profession.'

'No, it's a reality.'

'But you *can* have a profession, and be a——'

'No, you can't. If you have a profession you are a remarkable soldier or a remarkable poet, or a remarkable statesman or fishmonger, or whatever else you may happen to be. It's the difference between the finite and the infinite. The one does, the other is.'

'I shall certainly go out,' said I, 'if you have asked the infinite to tea.'

'Many women,' remarked Judy, as she pulled out the fingers of her gloves, 'would have been wildly excited over the caricature I have drawn of poor Philip.'

'Why poor?'

'I don't know, I am sure; he seems happy enough—now; but I used to think him one of the most unhappy people I ever met.'

'Why?'

'Again, I hardly know, for he was always successful in what he tried to do, and courted and prominent. But somehow it never seemed to do him any good; he always seemed to me to arrive at satiety without attaining satisfaction.'

'Like me when you insist upon ordering risotto for lunch.'

'He has been away for a long time,' Judy went on, disdainingly to notice me, 'nobody knows where. He disappeared from London, Paris, Rome—everywhere.'

each other. But I was very glad to think one always likes people one uses.

‘H—m,’ said I doubtfully.

‘Of course not, if one positively dislikes the same I doubt if positive dislike is kind. I read in a poem the other day wild brother,’ and I think it is true.’

‘Very possibly.’

‘Oh, you! You always disagree.’

‘But I am not disagreeing,’ I protested.

‘You would if you could, though. Good-mood of yours. Good-night. And the long black train out of the room.’

Two days later I was sitting writing at the window; Judy and I had a common table, each had our special writing-table. I heard and Judy’s voice said:

‘Annie, here is Mr. de Montadore on the other side.’

I closed my blotting-book, and turned round in the room, close to me, looking at the man in the dream. I do not know whether in my recognition that I seemed to catch it

As he talked, I observed him, and I saw that this was really the face of the dream and not the face I had seen for that instant's space in Piccadilly; the mouth was firmly set, and in the eyes was the suggestion of that uplifted look which had flashed upon me from out of the gray nothingness. Presently one or two more people came in, and by and by, while tea was going on, Philip de Montadore and I were left alone by the window. There came a pause in our conventional talk of Rome and its attractions, and then he said, quite suddenly: 'We have met before, I think.'

'Yes, in Piccadilly.' The thought of Arnold that day came over me like a flood; but I was used to such floods now, and had learned to stem them. 'I recognised you, but I hardly thought you would remember.'

'Was that our first meeting?'

I felt the blood rush to my face and flee away again. 'How—why—what do you mean?' I stammered.

'I had seen you before that day. I thought'—he hesitated—'you might have seen me too.'

But I would not help him. 'Where had you seen me?' I asked.

'If I were to tell you that it was nowhere in the material world, would you think me mad?'

'No; but I should like an explanation.'

'Do try one of these chocolate cakes, Mrs. West,' said a voice at my ear. 'I can assure you, you will not repent.'

'No, thank you; though they are very good, I know.'

'Some more tea, then?'

'No, thank you; I don't want anything more.'

'Well?' I said, when our well-meaning interrupter had returned to the tea-table.

'About two months before that day in Piccadilly,' said Philip, 'I had a rather curious dream, a dream which made a great impression upon me.'

'So had I,' I all but said, but held my peace and waited.

'I thought that I was—I hardly know where, but in some vague, blurred atmosphere; and that I was seeking ceaselessly

On, I felt that, I felt that,' I cried  
it now'; but aloud I only said: 'Wel

'The face was your face.'

'And you recognised it that day?'

'Yes, though the expression of it,  
different.'

'And now?' I said, half under my b

'Your face is more like the face I sa

We were both silent for a moment, an  
curious. And do you think there wa  
you dreamt?'

'Perhaps that we were to meet.'

'Do you believe in foretellings of the

'I don't know that I believe in a futu

'But how?' I exclaimed.

'As distinct from the present.'

'But there must be, since there is a p

'If there is.'

'But isn't there?'

'Yet evermore shall last  
The future, present past  
Of the self-conscious "I

he quoted.

A twinkle came into the eyes opposite me. 'It's a long way to look, you know.'

'You don't believe in palmistry, I dare say.'

'In palmistry, perhaps; in palmistes, no.'

'I don't see how you can believe in one and disbelieve in the others,' I said, a trifle nettled by that gleam of the eye.

'I don't know. I can believe in statesmanship without having much faith in the government.'

'Is Philip talking treason?' asked Judy, coming up; and then the conversation became general.

It was not till long afterwards that I told Philip of my own dream, the dream which was the complement of his; but I often asked myself the question: '*Where* had we met?'

## CHAPTER XL

'Love, wrong, and pain, what see I c

I SAW Philip several times in Rome, but friends then, though we were friendly; northwards, so unsettled were his plans that I was not sure whether we should ever meet again.

Judy and I went straight through to week there, my first visit to Paris since Godfrey's bride and had been afraid of criticisms of my hair. I went back to Rue de la Paix, where I had had it done. I had a sort of 'for old sake's sake' feeling sat there in my old place, smiling, half satisfied of those far-off girlish days. And at the puzzled eye of the coiffeur in the mirror I thought I was much more beautiful than I was thinking, for of course he could not see my face that I was looking at. I think of my children of one's own, the long past seems to come to seem almost like a dear loss.

Many other old scenes besides the coiffeur

at the different times from the same

houses where Godfrey and I had spent those memorable months, but on the north side, where the sun from the south shone all morning into the room I made my chief sitting-room. I lived in that little house, on and off, for nearly two years, and they were the most vital years of my life. I learned in them many things of many kinds. I learned much of human nature, its inconsistencies, its weakness, its possibilities, and I found that a woman who is alone is likely to receive many confidences, both from women and men. Strange stories I was told, stories running their tragic course under surface-smooth lives, and I found the wildest romances in company with the most commonplace exteriors. And good people I came across, with so much selfishness, hardness, and self-complacency to mar their goodness; and bad people with so much strength and virtue and love mingled with their badness. I dare say that the troubled felt I was troubled too, that the restless felt I was unsatisfied, the reckless that I would give them sympathy and not advice, and so were led to give their secrets into my keeping. Years before I had said—and been reprovèd by Cordelia for saying it—that I would rather be the confidante of the bad than the good, that I should like to feel that the most wicked would not be afraid to come and tell me of their wickedness; and Cordelia, I remember, said that the remark showed a tendency to evil in myself. I retained my ambition nevertheless, and during my life in London was in a fair way to realising it.

It was my experiences at this time which helped greatly to teach me the lesson of non-condemnation, to bring me to the state wherein nothing shocks me; and that, not because knowledge has made for callousness or cynicism, but has emphasised the folly and the sin of judgment. And at the worst, wickedness, apart from disease, positive wickedness, practised for its own sake, is not common, I think, in the world. People told me of evil they had done, but they had done it because they were weak or reckless, or unhappy, not because evil in itself was pleasant to them; they did what would be called wicked things, perhaps, but were



not themselves wicked: that was what I found. And the finding it was salvation, for, while all the world was dark to me and the longing after Arnold a never-ceasing ache, there was still this sweet amidst the bitter, that good was not slain of evil. Though I lost my trust in the goodness of God, I never quite lost my faith in my fellows; though the divine nature suffered eclipse, still in the human nature I saw a dim divinity. My trust in the love and justice of God went finally from me—except in so far as it persevered in an underlying intuition—when I began to listen to the voice of life as a whole; for, as I heard it, it was an exceeding bitter cry. My own private sorrow had made me rebellious; this sorrow of the world added hopelessness to my rebellion. The shadow of that hopelessness has fallen on not a few, and Shelley's *Prometheus* must have lived in numberless hearts, fighting passionately against the tyranny of the One, pitying helplessly the anguish of the many. For a long time that cry of the multitude was with me always. I heard it in friends' voices and in the streets; I found it in the newspapers, and in the books which reflected the feeling of the day. And it called to me in yet more mournful keys, with terrible, clashing discords, when I left the streets in which wealth makes a show of splendour or comfort, and entered those rank portions of the town where poverty is foster-mother to sin. Here sat dull misery, crowned with squalor, fit mate for the ruling king of active suffering, and here the cry was pitilessly distinct, pitifully persistent. I suffered then with the keen suffering of the optimist grown hopeless, of one who has believed in the sunlight and finds but darkness. Once, during those days, I went with Judy to hear a famous revivalist preacher. What dim hope I had in my mind of possible help, I know not, but some, I think, which, together with a certain curiosity, urged me to agree to Judy's proposal to go with her.

The meeting at which the revivalist was to preach was held in St. James's Hall, and when Judy and I arrived, the seats were nearly all taken. We found two places by the side wall, at right angles to the platform and to the bulk of the congrega-

tion, and though the bench was narrow, I would rather have occupied it than one of the chairs in the crowded rows, for it commanded the sea of faces in the body of the hall. A sort of expectancy was on those faces, dull for the most part and commonplace, belonging chiefly to the lower middle class; they had come there, all these people, in search of something—comfort, excitement, emotion, peace, or truth. Would the preacher feed their hunger with bread, or would he give them a stone? That was what I waited anxiously to learn; and if, by any strange chance, there should be a crumb for me.

A band of men and women entered the hall in line and mounted the platform; I knew which was the revivalist from the crude portraits of him I had seen on the posters. A somewhat coarse and somewhat heavy face he had, shrewd and strong, not intellectual, content. The service started with a hymn, played on the organ, sung by the whole congregation. The tune was familiar to me; the words, unlike those of many hymns, were both simple and sane. A large body of voices, singing in unison, has always, I think, a moving effect, and during the singing of that hymn, I was genuinely moved. It seemed to me that the faces I had watched, uttered themselves; the need I had seen was articulate in this common song; it was a cry of humanity to something greater than itself. Beside me, Judy sang in her clear pathetic voice—clear still, though she was a young woman no longer—and her whole soul seemed to be in the singing. The tears were not far from my eyes in those moments; this multitude of people gathered together by a common desire seemed to me infinitely pathetic; again I heard the voice of the world, and it was an entreaty now for a just heritage. Prayers followed the hymn, and I think a chapter from the Bible was read, but for me all that came before the address was only waiting; my attention was centred on the preacher, wondering what he would say to that expectant crowd. I knew that he was illiterate, I knew that he had worked his way up from society's lowest plane; but there would be, I thought, some spiritual emanation from the force which

informed him, that would neutralise faults of diction, that would be subtly and essentially delicate. I was disappointed, bitterly disappointed; there was nothing that I had hoped for. The sentences came forth easily and briskly; energy and animation were there; metaphor, illustration, analogy, gave colour to the words; the application to practical life of the doctrines set forth was pointed out in homely, forcible phrases: but of spiritual atmosphere there was none; or I did not feel it: it was all crude, and commonplace for me. For me; but the people liked it. I passed almost at once from the emotional to the critical plane; unable to partake of that which was offered, I observed its effect upon others. And those others liked it. They liked the commercial metaphors, the assumption of familiarity with the Almighty, the jests, the anecdotes, the pauses, the denunciations, the promises, the warnings. They wept and smiled and shuddered and laughed. For them, then, the man dispensed bread, and I, sitting there amongst them, found only stones, and felt, in my aloofness from the general sentiment, almost like a traitor. Since then I have been to many services of many kinds; services of the Salvation Army, of Christian Scientists, of bodies of various beliefs and aims; and at each and all I have seen that there was bread for some and barrenness for others; at each I have been more and more impressed with the folly and the fault of seeking to impose our own beliefs upon our neighbours, of seeking to mould our neighbours' souls to our own souls' needs. 'I have learned that as many ways there are to God as there are breaths among the sons of men,' says the Sufi; and when I hear people talk of beliefs or doctrines as dangerous or absurd, I think of the truth of the Sufi saying, and of the illustration of it given by Christ, of the new wine that must be put into new bottles, since the old forms could not hold the newer aspirations and ideas.

Judy and I drove homewards a little way in silence.

'Very disappointing,' I said after a time.

'Oh, did you think so? How?'

'I expected to be moved, and I wasn't.'

'I was,' said Judy. 'I don't believe in many of the things he said; but he moved me—at the time. I could have wept bitterly; I did cry a little.'

'And I could not have shed a tear to save my life.'

'Oh, you! you are so critical. If a thing is not in good literary form, it means nothing to you. But surely one does not need style to arouse one's emotions.'

'It was not style I missed,' said I, 'but simply the whole matter and manner of the man did not appeal to me; and I had hoped they would.'

'One man's poison is another man's meat,' quoted Judy; and, after I had left her at Clarges Street, I went home reflecting on the words.

'All that seems poison to me in orthodox religion may be meat to many. Always it comes back to that, that there can be no one creed or belief suited to all the world. It either means that all the faiths are false, or that truth is in the midst of them, and can be approached from any side.'

## CHAPTER XLIV

' Wer nie sein Brod mit Thränen ass,  
Wer weinend nie auf seinem Bette sass  
Die ganze Nacht,  
Er kennt Euch nicht, Ihr himmlische Mächte.'

I FOUND that I could not go to concerts any more. I had hoped that music, which had always acted so powerfully upon me, would take me out of myself, as the expression is, and shelter me from thought and memory. But it was not so; music proved, not a narcotic, but a stimulant. All I felt became accentuated under its spell; pain more poignant, loneliness deeper; and that emotional thrill from a half-sensed world beyond (I know not how to describe the sensation) so intense, that I could not bear it. What soothed me most in those days was, I think, to drive through the evening streets on the top of an omnibus. Often and often I spent my evenings thus; the lights, the movement, the shifting panorama, I myself in and not of them, had a curiously dulling, quieting effect. I did not think as I jogged along; only the outer eye saw, only the superficial consciousness was engaged. I should think that babies wheeled along in perambulators are lulled into quiescence in something of the same way as I was then soothed by my omnibus drives, and I can quite understand why they begin to cry when the motion stops. My excursions were not always on omnibuses. Sometimes, quite late, after the servants had gone to bed, my room would become hateful to me with its empty chairs and its positive stillness, which the rumble of the traffic outside seemed to rest upon without breaking; and then I would steal upstairs

for my hat and cloak, and down again through the silent house and out into the street; and, hailing the first hansom I came across, tell the driver to drive me about for an hour. My latch key let me in again, and my household never knew of these night expeditions. Not so Cordelia. One morning I received a call from her; when she had anything unpleasant to say, she always came in the morning.

'Annabel,' she began, and from her using that particular version of my name, I knew that I had done something I ought not to have done, 'I have heard a most unfortunate report, and I come for your authority to contradict it. I *know* it *cannot* be true, but I want your personal denial of it before I see Lady Binkson again.'

'I don't remember anything particular having happened lately,' I said.

'I know you are peculiar,' Cordelia went on; 'even, as I admitted to Caroline Binkson, disposed to be a little eccentric, but I do not think you would outrage decency.'

'No,' I said, but doubtfully, for I knew that Cordelia's ideas of decency and mine were not quite the same.

'It appears that Caroline and her husband were driving home the other night, *quite* late, getting on for midnight, in fact; and, on the Embankment, they passed a woman driving alone in a hansom, driving *eastwards*, and she declares it was you.'

'Which night was it?' I asked.

'Wednesday.'

'Then it *was* me.'

'I was sure of it,' said Cordelia, 'though I told Caroline Binkson, of course, that I was convinced she had made a mistake. And *what*, pray, Annabel, were you doing on the Embankment alone at that hour?'

'Caroline Binkson might have been more shocked if I had *not* been alone,' I said.

'That depends,' answered Cordelia. 'But what were you doing?'

'Driving,' said I.

'I mean where, of course.'

'As far as the Temple, I think I went, and then round by Holborn and Oxford Street.'

'But what for? You are really too provoking.'

I had no wish to provoke Cordelia, so I explained to her that I sometimes drove late as a form of relaxation. But the explanation was no excuse in her eyes; my ideas were absurd, she said, and my conduct would bring disgrace upon the family.

'And in a hat, too.'

'A widow's bonnet is so conspicuous,' I explained.

'That I should not have thought would deter you. If even you had had *nothing* on your head! You might have been supposed to be coming from a concert, and a concert, a classical one, would be permissible, even with your deep mourning.'

I did not remind Cordelia that there were no Concert Halls on the Embankment, or that I had been driving away from home when the Binksons had met me; I merely inquired whether the shocked Caroline had supposed that I was on my way to or from an improper *rendezvous*.

'How you can talk in that way with your husband barely cold in his grave, I fail to comprehend,' said Cordelia.

Now Godfrey had been dead seven months, so that Cordelia's statement was hardly consonant with fact, but that did not seem a point worth raising, so I merely dropped my handkerchief and picked it up again. I tried to make friends with her by asking her to stay to lunch, but she would not stay, and went away saying that *James* had been sure that Caroline had made a mistake. I was sorry to have vexed Cordelia, and after that evening I always wore a thick veil when I went on my evening expeditions; but I could not give them up, even to appease Caroline Binkson and her kind.

The season that summer was a gay one, and past my windows all day long went a stream of people, driving to and from entertainments of all kinds. I did not want to join in their amusements, yet it was lonely to look on, and sometimes I used to long to forget that sense of loss and mourning, and

just be careless and happy once more ; I wondered what it would feel like.

Towards the end of a weary day, I was sitting reading near an open window in the alcove of my sitting-room. The book had carried me away from my troubles for a time, so beautiful it was ; a volume of mystic stories, full of suggestion, with an atmosphere, an aptness of vocabulary, a literary distinction which charmed me. I turned to the beginning of the book and found the name *Michael Wood* upon the title-page, and as I was wondering who Michael Wood might be, I heard the door of the room open, and the butler's voice announce a guest. I did not catch the name, but, coming forth from my retreat, found myself face to face with Philip. I was surprised to see him, not knowing he was in England ; and glad, too, for I had been alone all day, and companionship was welcome. But apart from that strange meeting in the dream, we had been only acquaintances so far, and it was as an acquaintance that I greeted him. Yet when, an hour later, I said good-bye to him, we were friends. There are people with whom one feels at home from the very first moment of meeting ; others, outside whose door one seems to stand, holding but a barred intercourse upon the threshold ; and then, quite suddenly sometimes, the door opens, and one finds oneself admitted and admitting to an inner place. So it was with Philip and me ; somehow the consciousness of that dream meeting had seemed to hold me aloof from, instead of drawing me towards, him, and our intercourse in Rome had, after the first meeting, been of a purely conventional character. That June day in London it was different. Perhaps, in my own atmosphere, in my own room, the mantle of constraint in which I was wont to wrap myself, since grief had made me sensitive to every touch, was loosened ; perhaps, after the long solitude of that sweet, dreamy summer day, the loneliness in me cried out for comfort ; I cannot tell ; but I know that we glided from common-places into intimate conversation, that I became interested and animated, and that, when he left me, it was an understood thing that he was soon to come again.



## CHAPTER XLV

'He is not born, nor doth he die; nor, having been, ceaseth he any more to be: unborn, perpetual, eternal, and ancient, he is not slain when the body is slaughtered.

'As a man casting off worn-out garments taketh new ones, so the dweller in the body, casting off worn-out bodies, entereth into others that are new.

'For certain is death for the born, and certain birth for the dead; therefore over the inevitable thou shouldst not grieve.'

DURING the next month, the month before I left London, Philip and I met many times; but the next time I saw him after that initial visit, was a week later, when Sir Reginald Creagh, in town for a few days, asked both Judy and me to dine with him at that same Italian restaurant to which he had taken me before my never-forgotten interview with the woman of the portrait. We were to dine in a private room, Sir Reginald said, so that I should not require, in my deep mourning, to make anything in the nature of a public appearance, and there would be only one other guest besides Judy and me. That other guest proved to be Philip. We dined upstairs, in a quaint, old-fashioned room, where many famous diners had left memorials of themselves upon the walls. Covered those walls were with sketches, verses, bars of music; and some of the spirit that guided those artist hands seemed to linger in the atmosphere of the room. So I thought, at least, until the arrival of Philip, and then it seemed to me that his personality dominated and finally dismissed all traces of those other frequenters of the place. It was very different up here from what it had been downstairs on that other evening, when the many lights and mirrors, the buzz of conversation, the con-

stant movement, and the many people had all united to interest and excite me. Here the light was shaded, the excellently well-cooked little Italian dinner was quietly served, and instead of trying to catch the conversation of strangers, I was absorbed in that in which I was taking part. For it turned first upon the marvellous, and then to a subject, a theory, a hypothesis, a truth as I felt it to be, which altered my whole view of life. Sir Reginald had been telling us of some curious things he had seen in the East, and Judy had been expressing her disbelief in the conclusions to which his experiences would point.

'I believe that such things as you say, happen,' she said. 'So many people whose word I would trust as my own have told me of them, that it would be more foolish to withhold credence than to give it; and yet I can't believe in what their being true would seem to mean.'

'I don't know that you are logical,' said I. 'If you accept the facts as facts, it seems to me that you are bound to accept what they point to, as possible, in any case, and until some other explanation is forthcoming.'

'That I am not superficially logical, I know, though there is a sort of logic running through my position, if I could only demonstrate it to you. Take a concrete instance. I don't believe in palmistry, yet I went to consult a palmiste once. That was illogical, but inasmuch as I had heard of many people who had been told things that turned out to be true, there was a practical logic in my proceeding, though not a mental one. And further; that palmiste's prophecy was fulfilled, and I believe that she must have had something on which she based it; and yet I do not believe in palmistry—which you, Annie, would say is illogical—for the reason, logical in itself, that I cannot see how the lines in one's palm can have any connection with events.'

'Subtle, Mrs. Home,' said Sir Reginald smiling; 'but I suspect you of preferring disbelief to belief and of shirking the trouble of investigation.'

'You are wrong as to the preferring; I don't prefer one

belief to the other; but you are right as to the investigation. Not altogether because of the trouble of it, but because I don't come to conclusions in that way. When I find that I believe and feel a thing to be true, then I look round and see if there is enough evidence to warrant my belief; but I never investigate a thing for its own sake; inquiry follows belief with me, not belief inquiry.'

'Then what brings about your belief?' asked Philip.

Judy shrugged her shoulders. 'I don't know; it comes; I suppose from experience and unconscious deduction.'

'And evidence is only an accessory after the fact?'

'I suppose so. Yet, if you were to show me a reasonable ground for believing in palmistry, I might combine it with the facts—insufficient so far to convince me—of my practical experience, and so produce a faith.'

'I might show you a reasonable ground,' Philip answered, 'but I don't know that I ever want very much to persuade anybody to believe in anything.'

'But you ought to, if you believe it to be true.'

'What is true for me may not be true for you.'

'That sounds as if you thought yourself much more intelligent than I. Sir Reginald, can you give me a reasonable ground for believing in palmistry? I should really rather like it, if I could do it without feeling myself to be what the common-place people who think themselves strong-minded call credulous; the more so, because the more surely I was convinced it was possible, the more certain I should be that one ought to steer clear of it.'

'I think I might frame an hypothesis,' said Sir Reginald, 'if you really want to find one. To begin with, I might suggest that you come into the world with hands, as well as a face, not quite like those of anybody else. From the face much can be told, from the shape of the head, the position of the ears, the moulding of the chin, the set and formation of the mouth. It seems to me conceivable that the hand as well as the face may bear signs for those who can read them.'

'Oh, character, yes,' said Judy, 'that is quite comprehen-

sible, of course. But conceding that, I get no further. The point I am on is events, especially future events.'

'Well, there are certain lines which have been found so constantly to be associated with certain facts, that it is hardly what you call credulous to attribute to that association something more certain than coincidence. One particular line in the hand, for instance, if long, has been found to mean invariably that the owner of the hand will live to old age; if short, that he will die young. Another line always goes with intellect; a third, if straight and smooth, accompanies a life of ease and success, if broken and crooked, one of difficulties and disappointments.'

'But that is too general; it is well enough as far as it goes, but it goes such a little way. You speak of misfortunes and difficulties, but look how various they may be in kind. What I want you to explain is, how the fate of the individual can possibly be written upon his hand, and on your showing I do not get beyond a vague generalisation.'

'Mrs. Home is right,' said Philip; 'such a theory is not possible, is not conceivable as a hypothesis even, if you hold that we begin and end our connection with this earth in the life we are each of us living now. If everybody at present alive is animated by a new-made soul, that soul can have no history; there can be no past of sown causes from which to reap a future of effects.'

'I don't follow you,' Judy said; 'but go on, perhaps I shall see presently.'

'Assume for a minute that you have lived before, not once, but many times; that in your past lives you have performed certain acts which entail certain consequences; that the body you now inhabit is of the kind best fitted to further the tendencies you have formerly developed, of good and of evil; in other words, that those tendencies are expressed in your physical formation. The further supposition is not then a monstrous one, the supposition that the destiny you have so far prepared for yourself may be suggested in the lines of your hand, discernible by those who can read them.'

'But I don't know that I can assume all that.'

'Then I see no grounds on which a belief in palmistry would be other than absurd.'

'But,' said I, 'even if you had no past, might not your destiny be foreshadowed in your hand?'

'No; destiny without a past is fate. It means caprice on the part of the Deity; it means the destruction of any approach to free will. It is the wiping out of that belief in a past, a belief held by the earliest Christian sects in common with some of the oldest religions, that is responsible for half the misconceptions and inconsistencies of modern Christianity; it is the effort to supply its place that has given rise to some of the most hopeless doctrines that have ever libelled the love of God. The doctrines of predestination and election are but attempts to supply the place of the theory of re-incarnation.'

'Go on,' said Judy; 'I don't know that I agree with anything you say, but I like to hear you say it.'

Philip lighted a cigarette and went on talking. 'Nobody can help seeing that some men are born with a predisposition to holiness, to refinement, to art, to science, to philanthropy; to vice, to indifference, to cruelty, to craft. What is there in our present-day science or religion sufficient to account for this?'

'Heredity?' I put in.

'Physical heredity; but it covers so little; for two children, born of the same parents, and therefore with precisely the same physical heredity, are widely different in character. If you tell me that strains from certain ancestors come out in the one, and strains from certain other ancestors in the other, I can only ask why? What is the law that governs the apportioning of the strains? That God should damn a soul by means of its physical heredity, and that the workings of that heredity should be a matter of chance and not of law, are to me two equally inconceivable ideas. But make the heredity that of the soul, not only that of the body it occupies, and the inexplicable comes within the limits of understanding. For you have the race tendencies, the national tendencies,

the family tendencies, *plus* the tendencies of the individual, developing soul. The physical heredity is determined by the condition of the soul, not the condition of the soul by the physical heredity.'

'Still,' said Judy, 'I don't quite see that great liberty of will you insisted upon. It seems to me that, once started, you would go on birth after birth upon the same lines, with the same tendencies stronger each time; and what is that but fate?'

'It would be fate if it were as you suggest. But the law of evolution, inviolable in its working, cannot cease to act at any given point. It must hold throughout the whole of the universe, and the soul is bound by it to work, however slowly, towards perfection, till it reaches that from which it sprang. In every life it gains experience and knowledge, though from the outer appearance of failure or success its progress cannot be estimated. For the man of blameless life is not necessarily superior to the man whose career is stained with many faults; I take it indeed that the virtuous man—if he be virtuous, that is, through lack of temptation—has less chance of developing in this little space of earth-existence the divine eternal element in himself which is the real man, than he who struggles, failing perhaps in the fight, yet winning something of experience, of hardihood, of humility.'

'Yes, but take my own case,' Judy persisted: 'I am born here with certain tendencies, you say, and certain things, as I understood you to say, bound to befall me, as the results of my past lives. Where does my freedom come in, if all is planned beforehand? Am I not still a slave?'

'No, for though you are launched in a certain boat, you are free to guide the helm. Say that there is so much pain in your portion; you cannot avoid the pain, but out of it you can bring patience or impatience, win fortitude or clog your soul with bitterness. Say that you are born poor and destined to wealth; you may attain that wealth by fair means or foul; that you are doomed to a violent death, you may suffer it as a felon, a hero, or a fool.'

of what might or might not have been

'And a short life,' I said, 'a life inevitable destiny.'

'Yes, since it is the result of some part but the progress in a particular life is of length. How is it possible to know what is short, however apparently unfulfilled, and to have accomplished all that it was possible in that time? If one little appearance on this stage of a man's destiny, then indeed the hand is clasped in that of despair. But if we have with the sole object of learning so much in a prison-house, what matter if a little more of learning for the planes where the light will sink into our inmost essence? Absorb the results of these lessons become part of your character or talent the next time you are born.'

'I don't think I like the idea,' said she, 'to come back.'

I said nothing: I was thinking.

'With all due deference to Mrs. [unclear]

'I doubt if she means what she says

tion, peace, as it is ordinarily understood, the consciousness of virtue and the sense of being yourself; then and then only you can say that you do not want to come back.'

'Still, I dislike the idea—perhaps because it is so foreign to our Western habit of thought.'

'Yet not altogether,' said Sir Reginald. 'Listen to what a Scotchman says: "We are evidently in the midst of a process, and the slowness of God's processes in the material world prepares us, or ought to prepare us, for something analogous in the moral world; so that at least we may be allowed to trust that He who has taken untold ages for the formation of a bit of old red sandstone may not be limited to three-score-years-and-ten for the perfecting of a human spirit."''

'Yes,' returned Judy, 'I feel and have always felt that; but it does not follow that the perfecting is done here. Why not in other regions outside this world?'

'For no reason at all,' answered Philip, 'so far as I can see, except that you cannot in a single lifetime embrace all the experiences, or in other words, learn all the lessons, that this earth-life affords. So that if you did not come here, you would have to go to a world which would teach you the same things, and which would, therefore, be necessarily a world of a precisely similar kind. There are many worlds besides this one of the physical consciousness; but to each world belongs its own lessons.'

'I suppose you might also say,' I suggested, 'that there are a vast number of worlds within this world; the world of the rich, of the poor, of the scientist and the musician, of the observant man and the careless one, and that we must pass through them all before we are done with this earth.'

'Undoubtedly.'

'Yes, and the world of the sinner and the world of the righteous,' Sir Reginald put in. 'You can leave out none.'

'That makes evil as important as good,' said Judy.

'So it is—to perfection. Otherwise virtue would be negative.'



we all went downstairs to the street

## CHAPTER XLVI

‘I who saw power, see now love perfect too.’

THERE were trees at the back of my house ; all night long I sat by the open window and looked out upon them. I see them now, with the moonlight lying in patches in between, and above, the clear sky, hardly dark ere the dawn stole in a pale wave amidst the stars. Once—it was at the dawn—I rose to find a woollen wrap to throw over the thin insufficiency of my dressing-gown, but otherwise I sat till the day was well awake without moving. I could not have slept, for all my being was merged in a wonder of thought. It seemed to me that in the darkness in which I had moved since Arnold died, a door had been opened, and through the door light came ; I gazed at, and drank in, and analysed the light.

There was one supreme bitterness which rankled as a sore within my heart, which sounded in the voice of life as it wailed to me, which was a black gulf between the deductions of reason and the conception of the love of God ; the sense of injustice. Pain as pain I could bear, I felt ; death I could submit to ; loneliness I could endure ; if in pain, loneliness, and death there were any cause that determined, any result to be attained by, their onslaughts and existence. But the injustice which seemed to me to act in and through them roused me to rebellion. I could not resign myself to the workings of what appeared caprice, nor could I be content, like many, to submit in blind confidence to what I could not understand. Some reason I must perceive to justify the sufferings of myself and the world, or I must view those

sufferings with eyes of untamable revolt. And now, running through the riot of cruelty that had pervaded the world, I seemed to see a gleam of light, a glimmer of law, a justification of the existence and persistence of pain. The theory of reincarnation was not a new one to me; in the course of my reading, into which Eastern as well as Western philosophy had entered, I had necessarily come across it; but, like many things, of which one perceives the outer forms without laying hold of the inward significance, I had not realised it in its true meaning, in its bearing on the problems that beset me. I had indeed identified, or at least confused it with the lowest form to which exotericism had reduced it, to the doctrine, that is to say, of the transmigration of souls. Now I saw it in a new light, and it seemed to me to be a key to much that had puzzled and revolted me.

As I sat and thought, I seemed to transcend the limitations of my ordinary thinking powers, and see the many problems which had vexed me in a wider, clearer way. A conception of a vast and splendid scheme took rise within me; the gist of treatises that I had read rose up in my memory and found their place in it; the obscurities of philosophies took on, in the light it shed, a new complexion; the winding thread of metaphysics ran in less intricate curves; it seemed as if amidst the complications of existence there might run a truth bearing the lamp of simplicity. I saw Darwin's theory of evolution linked to an immeasurable beginning, proceeding to an incalculable end; I saw the spark of life æons before man came as man into being, working its way through the lower kingdoms into conscious and then self-conscious being, evolving in the lower forms till, those forms becoming inadequate to express its increasing consciousness, it passed on to higher ones. And constantly the means of advancement was by the process known as death, the breaking of the physical form, suited no longer to contain the advancing ego; and always growth was stimulated by sensation. Physical sensation it was at first, hunger and thirst, the body's needs; then emotional, pleasure and pain; the sensa-

tions increasing in subtlety with the development of the man ; till the joys and tortures of the intellect, the ideals and despair of the artist, the rapture and melancholy of the poet, were added to the simpler forms of suffering and delight. I saw that the idea of the brotherhood of man was not the dream of an impossible Utopia, but a reality independent of all differences of race, of capacity, of moral worth and political status ; that it could not be made concrete in social equality, since men were in different stages of evolution, and the social state, with its various degrees, each entailing different lessons and experiences, was one of the factors in that evolution ; but that, realised by the minds and in the hearts of men, it would break down the barriers of nation, of caste, of creed, and build up tolerance, patience, and sympathy. Grandeur than the socialist's conception of a common equality of worldly goods and political rights, was the thought of this bond of a common origin, a common experience, a common and glorious destiny. Grand indeed, for it gleamed in the light of Justice. What matter that I am on a low rung of the ladder, since I climb ? What matter that to-day, in this little span of physical existence which men call life, I am in a place of pain ; since, without that pain, dormant possibilities of my nature could not be stirred into being, and since to-morrow, the next time I am born into this world, the fruits of that pain will make a step upon my upward path ? What matter the unfulfilled desires, the disappointed hopes, the lost causes, the failures, yes, and the faults ; since not on one cast of the dice is my soul's health staked, but that again and again the great law of a perfect God sends me back to the school of life, till I have learned perfection ? A great confidence and a great humility came with this thought ; no room it left for self-righteousness, no place for despair. Words I had read came back to me, words I had not understood when I read them, but which bore a meaning now : 'Remember that the sin and shame of the world are your sin and shame ; for you are a part of it. . . . And before you can attain . . . you must have passed through

all places, foul and clean alike. Therefore, remember that the soiled garment you shrink from touching may have been yours yesterday, may be yours to-morrow.'

Those words brought back to me others I had read, and others again; my brain, working with strange vigour, gave up to me the gist of the studies that wearily it had pursued so long, and in my consciousness I could weigh, compare, and consider the knowledge I had gained. Considering thus, again I perceived, and still more clearly now, the unity of all the great teachers of religion; and there were two points on which they all insisted, on which hitherto I had not especially dwelt, and which seemed to stand out prominently now. One was the statement that man contained within himself a germ of the divine, was potentially God: 'The kingdom of heaven is within you' was the form in which that statement was most familiar; the other was the mention of a Path, narrow, steep, difficult to find, hard to follow, which outran the slow course of inevitable evolution, and by means of which a man, conscious of the highest within him, might press onwards to the attainment of that highest, in speedier and more strenuous wise than evolution's march, rising on the conquests of his lower self resolutely to the heights. The doctrines I had abandoned became fraught with new meaning. In the mission and message of Christ I saw a call, a persuading to the search for that Path, constant and reiterated instructions as to how to walk in it; and the conviction came to me that salvation meant speedier union with a God of Love, not flight from the wrath of a God of Vengeance. The atonement became truly, as I had heard it described, an at-one-ment; the Jewish conception of mercy bought and paid for dwindled before the idea of absolute justice, a justice identical with supreme, all-comprehending love.

It was that idea—the possibility of justice—which had set my soul trembling as I listened to Philip's words; it was that which had moved, growing clearer as I thought, through all the pondering of the night; it was that, rising luminous and distinct, while the day arose in golden vigour from the pale

pallor of the dawn, which flooded my whole being as I sat looking out upon the quiet trees. 'Peace on earth ; goodwill towards men.' Christ was born for me in a new sense, a saviour indeed of men, a messenger of God. I could listen now to the voice of Life without bitterness, without heart sickness, without rebellion. On a table near me lay a little book ; I opened it and found the words I wanted. 'Only fragments of the great song come to your ears while yet you are but man. But if you listen to it, remember it faithfully, so that none which has reached you is lost, and endeavour to learn from it the meaning of the mystery which surrounds you. In time you will need no teacher. For as the individual has voice, so has that in which the individual exists. Life itself has speech and is never silent. And its utterance is not, as you that are deaf may suppose, a cry ; it is a song. Learn from it that you are part of the harmony ; learn from it to obey the voice of the harmony.' 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear,' my mind added.

Sitting there with the rumble of the early traffic in the distance, and close about me the quiet of morning, the memory came to me of my Dream ; and it seemed to me that Philip had fulfilled the promise which his eyes had held in the vision.

## CHAPTER XLVII

'Our mind receives but what it holds, no more.'

I SPENT the summer with Judy in Ireland. We took a little house together, built far out on a headland on the west coast. The waves of the Atlantic beat and boomed constantly about us, for never was the swell of the great ocean quite subdued; and inland, miles of heather, bog, and peat stretched between us and what is called civilisation. I read and thought while Judy played. Bach and the Atlantic, Beethoven and the wind, Chopin and the wondrous sea sunsets, Wagner and the mountain peaks; these all are linked with Hegel, whom I read to find that a modern Western mind drew by intricate processes of thought to the same conclusions as the minds of the ancient East; with the mysticism of Thomas à Kempis, Tauler, and Molinas; with the ethical and spiritual truths of the Sermon on the Mount. Judy did not go with me all the way I went; she had no desire, as she expressed it, to see outside the world; she preferred to fix the microscope on human nature as she found it, rather than to search through the telescope for its origin. 'I fight,' she said, 'the battles of my sex and the inequalities of the society to which I belong. I am an analytical chemist with an Irish tendency towards a shindy—though it's my tongue I hit with instead of my fists—and not a constructive philosopher. I am content to be the captain of a troop; I don't want, like you, to be in the confidence of the general; and as for more lives than one, this that I am in now is so perplexing that I don't want to consider any more.'

'But you can't explain the perplexities of one without considering the others.'

'I don't know that I want to explain. I want to destroy the abuses that I see, to tell people that their inconsistent morality, their conventional virtue, is absurd; I want to preach against the one and shock, if necessary, the other; I want to support the weak women and teach tolerance to the strong. Oh, if I could only knock some imagination into people's heads! Why can't they see things!'

'Why don't you and I see the same?' I asked.

'But we do—essentially. It is only that you want a wider horizon.'

'Perhaps,' said I, 'it's all a question of horizon.'

'I refuse to be drawn into subtleties,' Judy replied; and she went to the piano and sang 'The Shan van Vagh!' What she said was true; though we did not agree in all our ideas, we were near enough in our point of view to be entirely congenial companions; we were sufficiently in accord to be able to differ comfortably. Therefore it was that I would have asked nothing better than to live side by side with Judy, knowing that I should be sure of her sympathy and of my own independence. But in October we parted. Judy went to visit relations in Clare, and I returned to London.

In London came a renewal and a deepening of my friendship with Philip. When I think of that friendship now it brings two pictures always to my mental eyes. One is of my dearly loved room—for it grew very dear to me—as it looked between the lights, the firelight shining on the copper bowls and plates which decked the top of my bureau, and throwing sudden gleams of brightness on walls and furniture and ceiling; outside, lamps twinkling palely in the growing dusk of the street; and beyond, the dim blurred forms of half-stripped or naked trees. The other picture is of that same room, but with the curtains drawn, the lamps lighted, and of the outside world no sign save the traffic's rumble. And in both these pictures mystery lurks in the dark angles of the room, and about the hearth is a glow of glory. For it was glorious to



me, in those fireside talks, to loose my thoughts in the fulness of freedom, to let the speculative tendencies of my mind have full play, to seize my companion's ideas and suggest others, to argue and follow argument, to inquire and listen. And sometimes the mystery of the shadowed spaces would mingle in our talk; for Philip told me of curious things, strange gifts, strange knowledge, strange powers; of much, no more wonderful indeed than the telephone would have seemed a century ago or than chemistry would be now to the yokel, and not wonderful to our descendants of a century hence, when the occultism of this age shall have become the science of the next, but marvellous-seeming to present-day knowledge, ignorant as yet of the nature or even of the existence of many forces which man will by and by discover and subordinate to his use. He told me too of the different states or planes of consciousness, and those on which man enters after death; of the acting out in little of the whole destiny of man, which, even as the human foetus evolves through all the lower stages of life before it becomes apparently human, the soul accomplishes in each birth, death, and the period intervening between the births. Much was made clear to me in those talks: I knew then on the borders of what land I stood when music drew me to the verge of a new consciousness; I knew whither I should have entered, had I so willed, that night, a little while before Godfrey died, when the familiar room had become strange and the curtain between two planes had thinned almost to transparency. And I understood why I had not dared to enter on the unknown, and why I had been wise not so to dare; and in the solution of certain mysteries I came to mysteries deeper still. Of reasoned proof that such things are, I knew well there was none; to me the hypothesis which accounted for them was so intelligible that I accepted the theory built up upon it; but proof, as Philip said, must be sought and found by each individual, not intellectually argued, but practically demonstrated; and the demonstration could only be arrived at—except by those of a particular psychic development—by a certain physical and mental training.

'If you follow certain rules,' he said, 'you will arrive at certain results, but each must work for himself, since the results I achieve can be no proof to you.'

'Yes, if I trust you sufficiently to believe what you tell me,' I answered.

'But belief is not proof,' he returned, 'although throughout the greater part of life it takes its place. Vicarious experience may point to, but can never take the place of, personally tested knowledge.'

Looking back to those days, subject after subject that we discussed and re-discussed leaps up in my memory; Christianity and its essential elements as contrasted with its modern orthodox interpretation, and how those elements, in their esoteric significance, must remain, enduring for ever, though criticism, scholarship, research, should rob of authenticity many of its received traditions, its written records, its exoteric doctrines; of how with new meanings, one could accept rejected dogma; of how creeds were but as the physical bodies of a religion, and their destruction could not imperil its vital truth. I see the firelight play and hear Philip talk, yes, and my own voice in question, assertion, argument; and then into the midst of it all comes a jarring element.

The winter was over and the spring had come, but it was cold, as spring often is, and a fire was still welcome. I remember that we had been talking, Philip and I, of various conceptions of peace, and had happened on the eastern doctrine of Nirvana.

'Most people over here conceive of it as a state of annihilation,' I said.

'Yes, instead of one of profounder consciousness. Yet there is a Christian term for it.'

'And that?'

'The peace of God which passeth all understanding,' he answered.

And then the door opened and Cordelia and Cynthia came in.

What a curious thing atmosphere is—personal atmosphere,

I mean! The atmosphere of my room with Philip in it, and the atmosphere of Cordelia, as she entered that day, were as antagonistic as two thunder clouds; they could not mingle; I was conscious of an impalpable bang as they met and of a sense of electricity in the air. But the lightning did not flash till Philip had gone. A distant thunder rumbled politely in Cordelia's stiff answer to Philip's, I must allow, somewhat feeble remarks, but her disapproval of my guest was only negatively conveyed, though positively felt. I talked to Cynthia about her children till Philip, after a glance at the clock, said he must be going; and then, when the door had closed behind him, I turned to my eldest sister, and with as bland a manner as I could assume—for I was always more than half a coward with Cordelia, and always uncomfortably conscious of her inward attitude towards me—said I hoped that James's cold was better.

'James has had no cold for the last week,' said Cordelia 'Pray, does Mr. de Montadore come here as often as people say? He had certainly the air of being very much at home.'

'I don't know how many visits people are kind enough to credit him with,' answered I, longing to get up from my seat and put coals on the fire, so as to avoid Cordelia's gaze, but determined to resist the inclination.

'I am much distressed to find,' Cordelia went on, 'and so is Cynthia'—she looked at Cynthia, who said 'Yes'—'and so is Amy, much distressed and annoyed to find that you and this Mr. de Montadore are being talked about.'

I had expected something, but not this; the idea of scandal in regard to my friendship with Philip had never entered into my head. 'Talked about?' I repeated vaguely.

'Yes, and considering that you have hardly begun to go about again——' And then the lightning flashed indeed, and thunderbolt after thunderbolt descended upon me. Cordelia told me that my conduct was undignified, not to say indecent, that everybody said I was in love with Philip, and running after him, while Philip—oh, kindly 'everybody'!—was, of course, not in love with me, was but making use of me

and my house to pass an idle time, and wanted, if he wanted anything beyond a convenient lounging place, only poor Godfrey's money. Cordelia laid a strong emphasis on the *poor*, and ended up by asking what father would have said.

Now, if there is anything unfair in reproach, it is the suggestion that the dead would disapprove of one's actions, and I felt that Cordelia's last blow was frankly below the belt. It did not hurt any the less for that; and though I tried to maintain a calm and careless demeanour till she and Cynthia had taken, the one a reproving, the other an embarrassed, farewell, no sooner was I left alone than I sank, completely vanquished, into a chair and—so women are made, or some of them, and I never was strong-minded—wept bitterly.

## CHAPTER X

'The Future I may face, now I h

I THINK I should have gone on crying, not been that the sheer necessity of dinner obliged me to check my tears. I might for concealing their traces. Fortunately, owing to the fact that I late my life to suit my own convenience conventional domestic laws, I was in position of being regarded by my lunatic, and so I created neither comment by announcing as I entered the have but one course for dinner, and t So I ate—or refrained from eating—soon to return to that fireside so in Philip, there to probe and consider th had made. I examined them carefully sting of truth in what she had said with myself, and I answered No; and indorse my verdict. No, I was not. That in other circumstances I might possible—but as things were—

degree; for, though I certainly was but an ordinary human woman, impulsive and emotional, there was an aloofness about Philip's attitude to life and the world which gave a unique character to our intercourse. It seemed to me that we stood in the relations of master and pupil, he giving to my ignorance out of his greater knowledge, and that on no other footing could that friendship stand. Yet he was to me what no one in the world had ever been; dearer than all, save only Arnold, who was soul of my soul in a way that none other could share; closer in companionship than I had deemed it possible a companion could be. I think till that evening I had not realised how much he was to me, how great a part of my life he had become; yet I knew, and know now, that my feeling for him, whatever in other conditions it might have developed into, had grown originally out of the comfort, the hope, and the freedom he had brought me; that not affection for the man had urged me to the acceptance of his theories, but that his theories, his mental and spiritual outlook, had commended to me the man.

I was thinking thus when Judy came in, Judy on her way to an 'At Home'; and from her keen but tender eyes I neither could, nor indeed wished, to conceal that something was wrong. She was all sympathy. 'Yet one cannot condemn Cordelia,' she affirmed; 'as a person, I mean; she is but a mouthpiece.'

'But of such horrid sentiments,' said I. 'Why must people always put the most unpleasant construction upon what one does?'

Judy shrugged her shoulders. 'Oh, people! People are—I wonder if one ever does that kind of thing oneself?' she interjected, with her old reflective air.

'You and I, do you mean?'

'Yes. Oh, I don't mean that we are hard on women as most people are hard, because we understand how and why things happen. But we may be hard on the non-understanders. I am inclined to think that one is not really tolerant till one is tolerant of intolerance.'

'Yes,' I cried, 'you're right—you *are* right. But——'

'Well? but what?'

'But you, Judy—you are hardly——'

'Oh, I fight intolerance, I know; one has to go on fighting it, and I am constantly intolerant of it too. But I am speaking of the ideal.'

'Oh, the ideal!' said I with a sigh, for life seemed very far away from it at that moment.

'And that brings me,' Judy went on, 'to something quite ideal I have been thinking of. I suppose, when you have arranged about Bertram and Ellis, that you mean to live, for part of the year at any rate, in London?'

'Oh yes. Though there are drawbacks. I had thought it would be so delightful, and now—it seems one must be so careful—can do nothing that is pleasant without——' The excitement consequent upon Cordelia's attack was wearing off, and I was beginning to feel very depressed.

'You are a little sweeping,' said Judy; 'but there is no doubt that a woman living alone is at a disadvantage in many ways; which is the point I am coming to. Why should not we two, who are each of us alone, take a house between us, and live, when we are both in London, together?'

'Oh Judy!' was all I could say, for the proposal, coming just when I felt so hurt and lonely, almost made me cry.

'We each prize our independence sufficiently not to wish to interfere with that of the other; we do not think alike on all subjects, but we are near enough not to mind the differences, and we would, of course, each have our own set of rooms.'

I liked the idea; I liked it more and more; and we sat and discussed it eagerly, till Judy, jumping up, declared that if she did not go at once to her party, there would be no party left to go to.

When she had gone, I sat on by the fire, thinking such much pleasanter thoughts than those she had interrupted. I had made many friends in London now; I was beginning to go out a little; I saw before me a life of interest, of con-

genial companionship, of effort to lighten, in the great world, the burdens of those I should meet with on my way through it. I would let Camp Holt, I decided, and spend the time I passed out of London in seeing some of the cities and countries I had read and dreamt of. Visions of far lands, of the wild new West, the mysterious East, chased each other through my brain; Egypt and the Sphinx, India, Mexico, Ceylon. And then London, with its pall of suffering and evil which I might help to lift, perhaps, a trifle; which did not affright me now, because now I seemed to see some meaning in the misery, because amidst the discordant clamour of complaint I seemed to hear faintly that voice which is not a cry but a song. And Philip? Yes, Philip was in the vision, and Judy; but there was for me now in life something which, while it included, was beyond and greater than those I loved, of the living and the dead; and I knew that, though my heart might bleed many times and sink, it would never again quite fail me as in the past; because of the keener sight of my inward eyes; because of the larger love.



' An aim in life is the only fortune  
found in foreign lands

It was towards the end of the  
Ralph Keston. I had not seen  
ago, when I had found a desire  
just long enough to send him  
married and I was free, an iron  
no sting, since the storm he had  
years ago. Yet I did not meet  
first moment of our meeting,  
wonderful past days caused me  
I recognised that the reality had  
was a ripple and soon over; .  
cool as he greeted me, was dis-  
over tea and iced strawberry  
days.'

'So old,' I said, 'as to be grey'

'But the memory of them is

'So young as to be careless,

Meeting my eyes then, he disclosed  
of an unhealed wound. We met  
always as mere acquaintances

dangerous, Ella Lillingworth called them, though how any views could be dangerous so long as they did not urge one to harm a living creature, I never could understand. 'For what can it matter to God,' I said, 'if we make a mistake in what we think? It matters if we go against conscience, if we sin against the light that is in us; but there can be no question of danger if, looking through a glass darkly, our vision is inaccurate. God must be greater than our eyes, and the mistakes of the finite cannot offend the infinite.' But I was sorry that my opinions had crept out, for I did not want to upset or disturb anybody. Cordelia looked upon them as even worse than Philip's visits; for a good many quite nice women flirted, she said, but nobody thought anything of the kind of people whose views I had taken up.

So I was not sorry when it was time to leave London. I went to the Italian Lakes, and wandered from lake to lake, enjoying the southern sky and the peaceful days, and, sometimes, the human nature of fellow-travellers; and, all the time, I was thinking of my future, and planning all that I would do and strive after when I was free. Hitherto I had not felt quite at liberty, for I still accounted myself responsible for my stepsons' wellbeing; but their guardian was to return in October; and after I had seen him, and arranged how and where they were to live, I should be entirely my own mistress. I would let Camp Holt, I decided, taking perhaps a cottage not far from London; and I would spend the greater part of Godfrey's wealth on those whose needs cried out to me. So I planned, and, full of my plans, set out on my return journey to England.

I shall never forget the autumn day when I went back to Camp Holt. Somehow I was reminded of my first homecoming, though then the weather had been gray with drizzling rain, and now it was crisp and bright; though then all had been wellnigh new to me, and now each yard of the road and the village street was familiar; though then the uncertainty of the future lay upon the landscape, and now it was stamped with the seal of the past. On we went, past the houses where flags had been flying on that day of our bridal progress, and

## CHAPTER L

'Better one's own Dharma, though destitute of merit, than the Dharma of another well discharged.'

FIVE days passed by; on the morrow I was to see Mr. Carruthers and arrange with him the future of my stepsons.

The nights were longer now than on that night, more than a year ago, when I had sat, with a new dayspring within me, and watched till the outer morning broke; yet through the longer darkness I watched once again, bound with the force of my own thoughts, till daylight came to the world and me. It had been a search then that absorbed me, something my soul pursued; and now it was a fight, a self that another self grappled with. Dim ideas which I had refused to heed were taking form, rising to the surface of my consciousness, though I strove to keep them still in the depths; ideas which ran counter to the plans I tried to dwell upon and ruffled the course of the future. I looked into that future; my life with Judy and the intercourse with the many friends I had made, the visits to those lands of east and west that beckoned to me, the friendship of Philip. I would not be morbid, I said, allowing false views of duty to warp my judgment; nor weak, letting myself be swayed by sentimental emotion: and my thoughts went on turning over the pictures that imagination had painted through long months. I saw the dark places where, in the crowded town, I hoped to kindle if but a rush-light amidst the blackness, to strike if but one note of harmony amidst the discord. I thought of the many restless, reckless, weary, of my own world, to whom ungrudging and unjudging sympathy meant sometimes as much perhaps as

clothes to the naked, bread to the hungry. I thought of Browning's words :—

' Though this one breast by miracle return  
No wave rolls by in all the waste but bears  
Within it some dead dove-like thing as dear,'

and that if I did not mingle with the flood, I could not hope to save from the waves of degradation the 'dead dove-like things,' the sex-stained of my sex borne down by the impure tide which flows through the sea of civilisation. I thought of all that, and dwelt upon it, and would not think of those heavy faces with the dull, wistful eyes. Yet they painted themselves before me, obtruding into those other pictures with unconquerable persistence, and in the voice of life that called to me from the outer world their voices sounded. I would not look, I would not listen; I was so sure of the way I had to go. Not here, in this cramped space, this shadowed corner of existence, was the entrance to the Path I sought, but out in the full current of sin and sorrow and struggle. 'Listen to reason,' I said, and listening, striving with all my might and main to listen, heard still the voices which repeated: 'You will never go away again. We could not live except at Camp Holt and with you.' And then another voice and another scene! Arnold lying in the Oxford room, and directing me to give his ring and scarfpin to his half-brothers. 'It's such hard lines on those two fellows,' he said. Hard, yes, much harder than the death, it was, which had come between Arnold and me; harder as time went on and age came near, and loneliness was more sure. For they were quite alone in the world. Relations they had, to be sure, but relations who were nothing to them, to whom they were but a burden; and between them and their fellow-men there was no meeting-point where friendship could exist. What was the meaning of it all? and the relation in which I stood to these two darkened minds? Could it be that here to my hand lay, not the work I would have chosen, not the life I would have

led, but my life-work waiting for me? 'Oh no,' I said again, 'oh no; reason says not.'

But love and pity, are they not reason's essence, elements of the Divine Wisdom which is the true Being? Surely; and so must bring light where dishonesty draws not a curtain before the window of the soul; and they entered into me, and worked within. The dawn broke and quivered into day ere I lay down to rest, but then I slept soundly, and awoke calm and refreshed; for the fight was over, and I knew what I had to do. When once more my stepsons said to me with doubt and confidence struggling on their stolid faces: 'You will not go away again?' I answered: 'No.'

## CHAPTER LI

‘But we have left behind us the old evangel of Pain. Our new watchword is Victory. Our genius is the lord of Joy. . . .’

So I live at Camp Holt. My choice may have been right or mistaken, wise or foolish, but for me it was inevitable, and therefore just. For a week or two every spring I go to London; for a week or two every autumn to Italy or France; sometimes Judy comes to stay at Camp Holt. I am much alone, for a report of my queer views has gone abroad, and I have not many visitors. Old Sir Reginald came often to see me as long as he lived, but he died two years ago, and he was the only real friend I had in the neighbourhood.

And Philip has gone too, far away from England. He came down, about a year after I had settled at Camp Holt again, to tell me of his going back to what the Germans call the Morning land. He wanted to take up a certain course of study, he said, to lead a certain kind of life, which he could do better there than here; and I did not seek to stay him, for every one must follow the light within, and do what seems best unto himself. Sometimes he writes to me, but rarely; and his letters and my unbroken friendship with Judy are the greatest pleasures of my visible existence.

For the rest, the fortune-teller's prediction has come true; the happiest part of my life is now. To the outer world it may appear dull, monotonous, sad perhaps; but inwardly the brightness grows, and contentment dwells with peace. For I have learned much in these quiet years; actual experience has assured me of the existence of worlds, imperceptible to the ordinary senses, lying close about us; of truths, un-

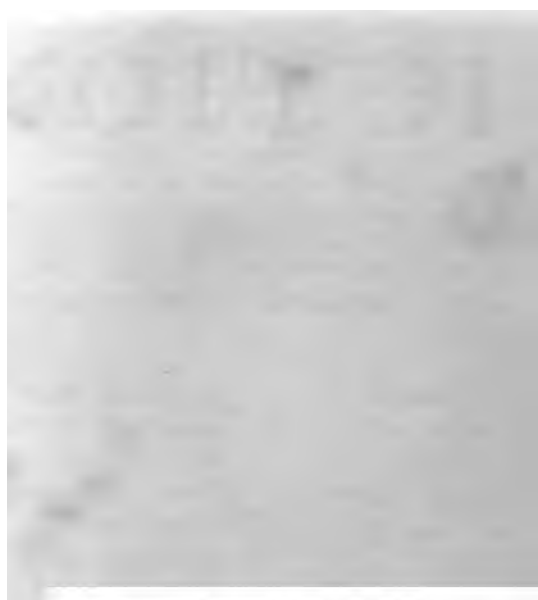
demonstrable, but to be grasped ; of secrets to be acquired by patient seeking. As time goes on, I lead, ever more surely, the inner life of the spirit ; yet, while the outer life grows ever less important and less real, I am content to live as long as need be in this world. The longing to pass out of it, nay, the sense of emptiness, has gone ; for I know that now while I am in the physical body, is the time for growth, for gathering of experience, the day during which I must work.

And sorrows, my own and those I see and hear of around me, I can bear now without bitterness ; and vice and crime and pain : since man is not a pawn of the Deity but potential God, treading in many selves a winding way back to Himself ; since sin is not defiance of the good, but a slow wearing out of the grosser nature, the passing through the bondage of which is necessary to omniscience ; since the ladder that most quickly scales the heights and leads most directly to the supreme transformation is a ladder of tears ; since the voice of life as I hear it to-day is, in its ultimate sound, not discord, but harmony, not a cry, but a song.

THE END







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